e-sticks@nd_text-stones:-/ cyberbullying_in_post-16_education

A phenomenological investigation into cyberbullying: a mixed methods study with specific focus on 16–19 year old students in post-16 education

Dean West

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick

September 2015

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Acknowledgements

There are many people to whom I owe a great deal of gratitude for their invaluable advice and guidance in making this important research possible. Thank you to my supervisors, Professor Sonia Blandford and Dr Michael Hammond, for your commitment, advice, and support over the last three years, for your much valued and precious time, and for guiding me through my journey as a doctoral researcher.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for their support and patience as I have continued my learning journey—I do not believe it will ever end, though. Thank you to Mom—you did good! I am looking forward to spending more time with you all, especially with Lee and Sandy, who have heard it all, many times.

This research would not have been possible without the participants that have taken part in this research. Thank you to all those students who completed the questionnaire. Thank you to the colleges that took part in the research and understood the importance of more research in this area. Thank you to the interview participants who really did enrich my understanding of cyberbullying.

Without you all, this thesis would have been an impossible task.

Declaration

This thesis contains work that was published by the candidate since registration of the PhD and as a product of the research that has been completed. All published work is referenced and acknowledged accordingly in the text and in the bibliography. This thesis is the result of the candidate's own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

The phenomenon of bullying and, more recently, cyberbullying, continue to be of interest to scholars, practitioners and policy makers. To date, the vast majority of research into bullying and cyberbullying has been contained to compulsory education contexts, leaving a dearth of literature in post-compulsory education. This thesis explores cyberbullying in the context of post-16 education in England, considering, in particular, four research questions relating to prevalence, involvement of particular groups, reasons for cyberbullying, and consequences on feelings, learning, and social integration. Previous research on cyberbullying is considered, including a discussion of the definition and criteria of both bullying and cyberbullying.

The main contributions to knowledge are the age group and context of this research, the use of phenomenology as a philosophical framework in the research design, data collection, and analysis, and how attribution theory is related to the reasons given for cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied. A mixed methods survey methodology was used to collect data; an online questionnaire was used to collect data from 5,690 students from 41 colleges, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect in-depth data from six victims of cyberbullying. In terms of prevalence, 7.9% of those aged 16–19 years old who study in colleges in England reported being victims of cyberbullying and 1.9% admitted to cyberbullying others. The findings also show certain demographic groups statistically more likely to be disproportionately involved as cyberbullies, such as boys and those who were offline victims at school, and as cybervictims, such as girls and those who had a physical disability. A range of reasons were reported for cyberbullying others, in particular the victim's intelligence/ability and because of feelings of anger, and for being cyberbullied, in particular because of their physical appearance and friendship groups. Various consequences for being a cybervictim were revealed, in particular on they way they felt and on their mental health/wellbeing.

Abbreviations

ABA	Anti-Bullying Alliance
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BERA	British Education Research Association
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DDLN	Dyslexia / difficulties with numeracy or literacy
DfE	Department for Education
FE	Further Education
FOIR	Freedom of Information Request
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
IM	Instant Messenger
IMDb	Internet Movie Database
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
LEA	Local Education Authority
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LOL	Laugh Out Loud
MD	Moral Disengagement
MSN	Microsoft Network
NCH	National Children's Home

NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PDF	Portable Document Format
ROFL	Rolling On Floor Laughing
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UKCCIS	United Kingdom Council for Child Internet Safety

Preamble

A 17-year-old student comes to your office, eyes filled with tears. He says he is upset because he is being cyberbullied. He does not want to come to college anymore. He wants to give up on life because he cannot handle the pressure. He tells you that many people have threatened him online, and via text and email. He cannot get away from *it*. He cannot get away from *them*. He shows you one message of the many sent: 'I'll beat the shit out of you and enjoy watching you die slowly, gay boy'. Nasty rumours have started at college now, and pseudo images with his face on naked bodies performing sex acts have been sent to fellow students and are on YouTube. This boy is desperate and needs your help.

What do you do?

Preface

Certain events in our lives stand out more than others and leave lasting marks in our memories. Good or bad, they are brought back to life by certain triggers, such as a smell, a word or a repeat experience. Perhaps we only want to remember good experiences and hope the bad ones will go away; or perhaps our bad experiences are *never* forgotten.

Being bullied can be one of those life-scarring experiences—the ones that leave upon us mental and physical impressions of harm and suffering. The often-daily recall of the chants, the names, the hitting with fists and sticks, the rumours, the whispers, the isolation, the feeling of being laughed at, of being called a 'boffin', all still go through my mind. For me, most days at school were miserable; I looked forward to the weekends and school holidays—at least then I would get a break from it all. After five years of what could have been easily referred to as 'hell', my time at school finally came to an end.

College was a fresh start for me: virtually all new people and a new environment. My bullies had gone elsewhere. I embraced college life and did well; I achieved good grades and went off to university. But I never forgot my hell—and I do not think I ever will. Although college was a safe haven for me, it did not provide the same for everyone.

Sam was not so lucky. I do not know how it all started, but I do remember the horrible words about his weight, his choice of dress and his accent. Sam was in one of my classes. I felt embarrassed and sorry for Sam when several members of

that class made direct and sly remarks—just for the sake of it. Some others joined in. I did not. The taunts went on for a while; weeks, months. The teacher was busy, pre-occupied and oblivious, especially to under-hand remarks. But it was not only in the classroom that the abuse could be witnessed. I would see and hear things outside, too: laughter and pointing, shouts of 'gay boy' and 'fatty'—horrible names. I was reminded of my own experiences. I felt embarrassed and ashamed, and I was not even involved. But I did know about it, and so I decided to tell someone—one of the college managers in the courtyard. I pointed out Sam, explained briefly what I knew, and went off to lesson. I did not see Sam again after that. I thought nothing more of it, but I never forgot Sam. I wonder where he is now and what he is doing…I hope that he is okay.

One thing I cannot recall during my time at college (2001-2003) is bullying by phone or email. I do remember my phone at college, though: a Nokia 3210. I used it to call and text—I had an email account for anything else: to apply to university, to check exam information and to keep up-to-date with college life. That is about it. With the exception of the workload of my A-levels, life was pretty simple for me at college. Yet today is different: my iPhone feels like another limb. I can access the internet, write and respond to emails, keep up-to-date with my family and friends, instantaneously update people about what I am doing at any given time, accompanied with photos and thoughts. Technology has changed considerably—and with that, so has the nature of bullying.

1 Introduction

1.1 Personal Reasons for Writing this Thesis

The motives for undertaking this research at PhD level were varied. My own experiences of being bullied and witnessing bullying provided the original impetus to carry out research in this area. My first experience with the covering of bullying in an academic context was on my Initial Teacher Training course, and it came under the umbrella term ‘safeguarding’. Cyberbullying was mentioned as a growing issue, and this interested me as a research area and, consequently, the focus of my Masters dissertation became ‘cyberbullying in post-16 education’. I found from conducting a small-scale research project at Masters level that cyberbullying was happening in colleges and concluded that more research needed to be undertaken (see West, 2012). The details of my initial Masters research are covered later on. There is no replication or duplication of research findings of the Masters dissertation and this thesis.

This PhD research has provided me with the opportunity to make an original contribution to knowledge in this field in terms of the age group and context considered. Working as a teacher and manager in a sixth-form college provided me with a better understanding of the lives and experiences of teenagers in education and their interaction with technology. This research has enriched and informed my own practice by allowing me to appreciate the perspectives and experiences of the age group I teach.

1.2 The Era of Information and Communications Technology

Technological innovations have impacted on the way in which young people live and communicate; forming part of young people's normal daily social routines and playing a key role in keeping adolescents informed and in touch with one another (Boyd, 2014).

The way in which we communicate has not only become quicker, but also cheaper and more interesting. Adolescents have been able to grasp, navigate and adapt technology with ease and fluency compared with preceding generations (Cross *et al*., 2009). The so-called 'generation gap' between adults and children—by which knowledge and experience has been traditionally time-bound—has now become the '*digital divide*' (Bauman, 2010, p.804; original emphasis). It has become increasingly difficult for most adults to keep pace with 'techno-savvy' adolescents.

In the UK, 99% of 8–17 year olds now have access to the internet either at home or at school (Cowie and Colliety, 2010). The development of 'smart phones' has further enabled access to the internet and email, and take pictures, send and receive messages, and make calls—all on one device. Accessing the internet through mobile phones, uploading and sharing photos and statuses, instant messaging, and 'tweeting' are all familiar practices for young people today (Hinduja and Patchin, 2008). On Facebook alone, new meaning has been assigned to words and phrases, such as 'wall', 'poke', 'status update' and 'news feed' (Griffith and Liyanage, 2008). Technology and online social networking has 'significantly transformed the nature of everyday social interactions' (Kwan and Skoric, 2012, p.16).

Gangadharbatla (2008) frames adolescents' use of technology around the need to feel socially accepted by maintaining positive and lasting interpersonal relationships. Social networking sites provide a platform for creating and developing such relationships, and can address a need for belonging. The benefits of technology for adolescents and society as a whole are clear. On the one hand, technology can provide social and educational benefits by facilitating new learning and access to knowledge, as well as a place for self-expression and making new friends (Norman and Connolly, 2011; Bauman *et al*., 2013). On the other hand, however, there is a risk continuum representing real danger for the same users. In the extreme, technology can be used to facilitate and distribute child pornography, and can be used to groom, sexually exploit and blackmail children and young people. The fact that the UK has set up the Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS)—a multi-stakeholder group that considers how children and young people stay safe in the digital world—provides added weight to the realisation of the dangers of the internet and the risks of using such technology.

Communication technology has also provided a new platform for bullying to take place. This relatively new phenomenon, referred to as 'cyberbullying', has received growing attention in the media, and in academic, education, government and legal contexts. Other phenomena also have been made possible by the widened use of technology, such as 'sexting' (the sending of explicit, sexual pictures or messages from one person to another) and 'trolling' (persistent comments on websites directed towards a person) (Slonje *et al.,* 2013). These phenomena are unintended outcomes of technological development.

What is clear, in light of the benefits and despite the risks of its use, is that technology and online interaction is here to stay. For an adolescent to lose connection with their online world, even temporarily, can trigger thoughts in teenagers' minds of 'social death' (Kowalski, 2008, p.49).

1.3 Origins and Early Research of Bullying

The etymology of the term 'bullying' began in the 16th Century as a term of endearment as 'boel', meaning 'lover of either sex' (Shariff, 2008, p.12). In the 1700s, 'boolie' was used to mean 'beloved', and later, Shakespeare used the term 'bully' to denote a close friendship between people who would tease and joke with one another (ibid). Coalminers used the term to describe rowdy co-workers and, by the 1800s, it had connotations of violence and associations with gangs. By the end of the 19th Century, to be a bully was to treat people in an 'overbearing manner', 'to intimidate' and 'to frighten' (ibid, p.12). In terms of its etymology, it is sometimes difficult for people today to recognise bullying in different contexts. Shariff (2008) suggests language, such as the term 'gay', when directed at friends, is often used without hurtful intent. Playful teasing can escalate into bullying when a power imbalance is created, and is characterised by a continuum of behaviours, which are made clear later on when discussing the definition and criteria of bullying.

Despite bullying behaviour being around for centuries, systematic research of bullying in educational contexts has only been conducted for the last forty years (Kwan and Skoric, 2013). Only relatively recently has bullying been seen as an issue that has warranted attention, previously being thought, as Shariff (2008) highlighted, as a normal part of growing up. This view has now changed. Dan

Olweus (1978), a pioneer of bullying research in Europe, carried out the earliest large-scale studies of bullying in the 1970s, with children in Norway and Sweden. Olweus (ibid) found that approximately 15% of pupils in schools were involved in bullying as either victims (9%) or bullies (6%) on a frequency rating of 'now and then' or more.

Smith (1997) pointed out that until well into the late 1980's, bullying in the UK remained a low-key issue. In 1991, the Department for Education funded the Sheffield Anti-Bullying Project, as part of wider behavioural research, focussing on the nature and extent of bully / victim problems in junior and secondary schools in Sheffield (Smith, 1997). The Sheffield project, carried out in 1993, involved a systematic evaluation of anti-bullying practices in 23 schools, with a view to develop a whole school policy on bullying and to support development and evaluation of interventions against bullying.

Whitney and Smith (1993) surveyed 6,758 pupils across 17 junior schools and seven secondary schools. The researchers found that 27% of primary school pupils and 10% of secondary school pupils reported being bullied 'sometimes' or more frequently since the start of term (the questionnaires were distributed in November). The finding for those admitting to bullying others was 12% in primary school and was 6% in secondary school. Those who indicated that they had been bullied or had bullied others 'once or twice' were not included in the prevalence rate, but the researchers did not provide reason for this. This could have led to the prevalence rates reported being lower than indicated by participants. The consequences of this meant that the voices and experiences of participants were not fully reflected in the findings.

However, in their paper on estimating prevalence levels, Solberg and Olweus (2003) discussed a suitable 'cut-off' point. The authors suggested that '2-3 times a month' or more often should be used as the lower-bound cut off point, since bullying occurs over time and is repetitive, and because this measure is somewhat consistent with measures used in previous studies. Consequently, those who reported being bullied less often (i.e. 'only once or twice') were not categorised as being victims, similar to how Whitney and Smith (1993), above, classified this category of respondents. One of the reasons why Solberg and Olweus (2003) decided to discount this frequency ('only once or twice') was because the respondents to their questionnaire who selected this frequency had, on the whole, had

> '*been exposed been exposed to more temporary and 'lighter' or less serious harassment than students in the 2-3 times a month category'* (p. 262)

This issue is being raised at this juncture as it represents a recurring and important part of this thesis. Further discussion takes place regarding the issue of measuring prevalence rates later on in the thesis.

1.4 Growth and Attention of Cyberbullying

The media has been largely involved in the exposure of cyberbullying. Television programmes, such as Hollyoaks (Farber, 2012) and Coronation Street (Kilkelly, 2013), have had storylines on cyberbullying. There also have been films made about cyberbullying, such as 'Cyberbully' (IMDb, 2011) and 'Odd Girl Out' (IMDb, 2012a). Celebrities, such as singer Ella Henderson (Ragani, 2013) and diver Tom Daley (BBC, 2012), have been the victims of online attacks. One only has to Google the term 'cyberbullying' or make a cursory search on YouTube to

find thousands of examples of how this new phenomenon is being committed and how it is affecting people. However, formal enquiry into cyberbullying is still in its early stages of investigation. Further investigation into this growing issue is needed in order to better understand its form and boundaries and to ultimately inform theory, practice and policy in this area with a view to devise operational prevention and intervention strategies for dealing with it.

1.5 UK Policy Context

In September 1999, the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 came into force in the UK. Section 61 of this Act introduced a statutory requirement for schools to have an anti-bullying policy as part of their wider pupil disciplinary policy. A short time after this, the Education Act 2002 came into force and imposed upon schools and legal authorities a legal obligation to safeguard the welfare of children in their care, including the health and safety of children, and ensuring protection from bullying. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 put a duty on head teachers to ensure good behaviour and appropriate discipline are maintained, and, more specifically, that all forms of bullying between pupils are prevented.

Smith *et al*. (2008) suggested that awareness of cyberbullying as an issue in the UK originated—at least at government level—in the 2002 publication of 'Don't Suffer in Silence'. Since then, the government has published several other guidance documents in relation to bullying. In 2007, the Department for Children, Schools and Families published the guidance document 'Safe to learn: embedding anti-bullying work in schools' in which they stated (DCSF, 2007a)

> *'there is no place for bullying in our schools'* and *'no child deserves to suffer the pain and indignity that bullying can cause'* (p.4)

The Safe to Learn series also included guidance on cyberbullying (DCSF, 2007c). The Safe to Learn guidance is now archived. The Ofsted Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2012) included a section to check how institutions protect and educate staff and pupils about using technology and consider the measures and interventions that are in place to support those involved in cyberbullying situations should they arise (Ofsted, 2012). The expectations on institutions are clear: all teaching and non-teaching staff should be trained, as a priority, to be aware and recognise e-safety issues. This training should be continuous and one member of staff must receive accredited training.

The Department for Education (DfE) (2014b) defined colleges as:

> *Organisations designated by the Secretary of State as eligible for receiving public funding through the Learning and Skills Council and are thereby seemed suitable to deliver provision within the FE sector* (DfE, 2014).

The Further Education (FE) sector is an umbrella term that includes sixth-form colleges and further education colleges—principally where 16–19 year olds study. These institutions are receiving taxpayers' money to provide education to young people, making it even more important that they are fit for purpose and are taking matters such as cyberbullying seriously. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2009) point out in their 'Safe from bullying in further education colleges' publication—a one-off document specifically aimed at post-16 contexts—that

> *Further Education colleges help young people to gain new skills and build confidence and resilience. But a few learners can find they are targeted for bullying. If permitted to continue, these situations can send a message to the group that bullying is acceptable'* (DCSF, 2009, p.8).

The same document also stated that

> *Every learner should feel safe to learn and socialise. Every young person should be safe from victimisation and discrimination at College…No one should suffer the pain and indignity that bullying can cause* (DCSF, 2009, p.9).

Despite these words on safeguarding the learner, there has been a lack of interest in pursuing this age group to an acceptable level, either by government or scholars. Although it provides a starting point, this DCSF publication itself was not informed by rigorous research and did not adequately capture the range of issues, contexts and experiences of the range of young people studying in colleges.

Information provided in a response from a Freedom of Information Act request (DfE, 2014b; 2014c) reveals the extent to which government has provided funding for anti-bullying charities. The request sought information since the time records began but the response received explained that funding details could only be provided from 2010 onwards. The table below outlines the funding commitment of the government.

Table 1: Amounts that anti-bullying charities received from the UK government from 2010–2014

Organisation	**2010/2011**	**2011/2012**	**2012/2013**	**2013/2014**	**Total**
BeatBullying	£415,000	£347,000	£9,000	£782,000	**£1,553,000**
The Diana Award	£490,000	£519,000	£214,000	£350,000	**£1,573,000**
Achievement for All	N/A	N/A	N/A	£731,000	**£731,000**
Kidscape	£90,000	£83,000	£153,000	£97,000	**£423,000**
Total	**£995,000**	**£949,000**	**£376,000**	**£1,960,000**	**£4,280,000**

Department for Education (2014b)

As can be seen, anti-bullying was modestly funded and directed via third sector organisations. For example, two of the largest recipients have been BeatBullying, who published the Virtual Violence research covered later in the literature review, and Achievement for All, which is a relatively recent organisation set up to improve educational outcomes for the most vulnerable children in school (Achievement for All, 2015). The Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield, recognised that online and offline bullying were part of her department's immediate priorities for making 'the country a better place for all children and young people to grow up in' (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2015, n.p.).

1.6 Rationale and Scope of this Research

Bullying in any form is abuse, whether it occurs online or offline. It is by no means a rite of passage or a 'fact of life' (Cross *et al*., 2009, p.13) for young people growing up. No individual should suffer the indignity of being bullied at any age or stage of life. During 2012-2013, a total of 30,387 calls were made to ChildLine about bullying/online bullying (representing 11% of all calls made), of which 31% of calls were made by teenagers aged 16–18 years old (ChildLine, 2013). These statistics show that bullying and cyberbullying does affect those aged 16 years old and over and reinforces the need for further investigation.

Despite increased attention on cyberbullying from scholars and policy makers in education contexts, there remains a distinct lack of attention in post-16 education. This is in terms of academic research, guidance and resources, not only related to cyberbullying but also to bullying as a whole. This is the case both in the UK and in other countries. The necessity for formal enquiry is justified on the grounds that cyberbullying does occur in post-16 contexts. This was found to be the case in my

MA research where 10.7% of 181 surveyed students aged 16–19 years old in a college of further education in the West Midlands admitted to being cyberbullies and 6.7% had been victims of cyberbullying. As far as I was aware, no other study had solely considered 16–19 year olds who studied in colleges; where adolescents aged 16 and above were considered in cyberbullying research, this was usually been as part of a larger study. It was rarely the case that this age group had separated from others for in-depth analysis.

As will be revealed in the literature review chapter that follows, there were also gaps in cyberbullying research in terms of *theoretical explanations* for cyberbullying, and the *voice* of cybervictims in terms of their *lived experiences* of being cyberbullied. Therefore, *attribution theory* was used as a theoretical model to explain why people cyberbullied others and were cyberbullied, and *phenomenology* was used as a philosophical framework to place importance and emphasis on the voice of students in college.

The importance of research on cyberbullying both in the context and in this age group should not be overlooked. Those who study in colleges should not be characterised merely as confident, developing and maturing individuals; there are many vulnerable sub-groups in this age range and context, too, including those who are vulnerable as a result of various factors, including learning or physical disabilities, amongst others. There were approximately 1,367,000 million students in England in post-16 education, including in sixth forms and general further education colleges (Department for Education, 2014b). Thus, a significant number of people in society can benefit considering the opportunities to develop theory, practice and policy from this research. This thesis tackled the paucity of literature

in this context and contributed to the wider field of bullying research and theory.

This research focused on collecting data from students in sixth form colleges and further education colleges in England. The sampling frame excluded secondary schools and higher education institutions, in an effort to ensure the project was manageable in terms of the timescale and resources available. The inclusion of 16–19 provision in secondary schools and higher education should be a focus for future research, although studies from such contexts are considered in the literature review. The age range considered was 16–19 year olds as this represented the ages of most of those studying in colleges. This research adopted a cross-sectional design as opposed to a longitudinal approach owing to the time constraints and the need to evaluate the conceptual and methodological frameworks prior to the completion of further research and data collection. This research did not consider methods of prevention and intervention, since it was felt that more needs to be done first on the nature and effects of cyberbullying, so that later research on prevention and intervention can be better informed.

1.7 Approaches used in this Thesis and Research Questions

Alongside the age group and context considered in this thesis, the philosophical, methodological, and theoretical approaches used also contributed to the original contribution of this research. *Phenomenology*, an essentially qualitative-based approach to developing and carrying out research, which places importance on the lived experience of participants, was used as the philosophical framework, in order that the voices were gathered of those being researched and to get closer to understanding the experiences of those who experienced cyberbullying. In terms of methodology, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data was gathered,

using questionnaires and interviews, from students in colleges. This mixed methods approach allowed for both measurement and explanatory elements of cyberbullying, from the perspectives of participants. *Attribution theory* was used to frame the reasons why students are victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying. These approaches will be explained in more detail in the literature review and methodology chapters.

This thesis aimed to explore cyberbullying as a behavioural phenomenon by answering four main research questions set within the 16–19 year old age range in colleges:

1. How prevalent is cyberbullying amongst students in post-16 education?
2. Are there particular groups that engage in or experience cyberbullying disproportionately?
3. What reasons do students in college give for cyberbullying others and for being cyberbullied?
4. What are the consequences of cyberbullying on feelings, learning and social integration for cyberbullies and cybervictims?

The choice and importance of answering these questions are covered in the literature review.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

The literature review, which immediately follows, opens with a descriptive account of how the review has been conducted and what sort of literature has been used. The major themes in the literature are then drawn out, beginning with a discussion of the definition and criteria of bullying and cyberbullying. Prevalence

levels of cyberbullying are then discussed, integrated with suggestions as to why prevalence levels differ between studies. This leads into how different groups—in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability—are involved in bullying and cyberbullying as victims and bullies. Next, the reasons and motivation for bullying and cyberbullying behaviours are considered, at which point attribution theory is introduced as a theoretical framework to explain why people engage in cyberbullying behaviours or are victims of such behaviours. The last substantive theme covers the consequences that being cyberbullied or being a cyberbully can have on feelings, learning and social integration. The chapter ends with a summary of the literature and the arrival of the four research questions.

The methodology chapter begins with an overview of the philosophical and methodological orientations that guided the study. This is where *phenomenology* is introduced and explained as a central feature of this research in terms of influencing the research design and analysis. The research design is then discussed, including explanations on how the questionnaire and interview methods were designed, and details relating to ethics and treatment of data. An overview of the participants is then provided, followed by the procedure used for data collection for both instruments. The data analysis procedures for both quantitative and qualitative data are described. The chapter closes with a discussion of validity, reliability and trustworthiness.

In the findings chapter the questionnaire findings are presented first, starting with an overview of the participants' demographics. The findings are presented according to each of the four research questions, which are presented in turn. The

interview findings are then presented as case studies created by a descriptive phenomenological process.

The discussion chapter is structured by research questions, which are discussed in turn, integrating quantitative and qualitative data from this research and comparing it to previous research and theoretical frameworks. Throughout this chapter, further points are raised in relation to theoretical and methodological issues in cyberbullying research.

Lastly, the conclusions chapter provides a reminder of the substantive issue and a summary of the answers to the research questions. The methodological strengths and limitations of the study are then discussed. The thesis ends with recommendations for policy and practice, and future research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review provides an overview of cyberbullying research, culminating in the generation of research questions related to cyberbullying in post-16 education. In an effort to widen the scope of the literature considered, a combination of academic, professional and 'grey literature' was searched and reviewed. Initially, Google Scholar was used to gather academic journal articles related to bullying and cyberbullying in education. The following search terms were used for this preliminary search, carried out in October 2012: 'bullying in school', 'bullying in education', 'cyberbullying in schools', 'cyberbullying in education', 'bullying in post-16 education', 'cyberbullying in post-16 education', 'bullying in colleges' and 'cyberbullying in colleges'. The literature from this search was saved electronically to my personal laptop, and the relevant articles were accessed from different journals using login details from the University of Warwick. No date or journal parameters were set in an effort to better search the field as a whole. Following this, the same search terms were used in a general Google search in an effort to obtain professional and grey literature. Relevant documents and website links relating to the scope of the research were also saved my personal computer.

During the period spanning October 2012–February 2013, literature from the initial literature search were considered in detail. The approach used was to read each item in turn, noting down from it the main themes, foci and notable

contributions. Information garnered from the literature was referenced and cross-referenced according to the categories developing in the literature.

In March 2013, a second literature search was carried out. The same process as that detailed above was followed, including new search terms based on various themes that had emerged in the first search, such as 'prevalence of bullying', 'prevalence of cyberbullying', 'reasons why people bully' and 'reasons why people cyberbully'. During the period April 2013–March 2014, periodic literature searches were carried out in an effort to collect new literature. To keep up-to-date with any relevant new research, Google Alerts using the terms 'cyberbullying' and 'cyberbullying in education' were set up, as well as alerts to Taylor and Francis journals with an education or social science research focus.

Scant literature was found in relation to cyberbullying in colleges. What was yielded, however, was a wealth of information that centred on bullying and cyberbullying in school contexts, with younger age ranges, both in the UK and abroad, mainly in mainland Europe, Canada and America. The main themes that have emerged in literature are now reviewed, beginning with the definition and criteria of bullying.

2.2 The Definition and Criteria of Bullying

Although there is no universally agreed upon definition of bullying, there is consensus amongst many scholars and policy makers in the Western world of how bullying can be defined (Bauman *et al*., 2013). Dan Olweus (1993), regarded as an early pioneering researcher and current expert of bullying, defined bullying as follows:

> *When he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending him or herself.* (p.8)

A more recently worded definition of bullying by Smith *et al*. (2008) is below:

> *An aggressive act or behaviour that is carried out by a group or an individual repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself.* (p.376)

The latter definition is widely used by researchers (see Campbell, 2005; Bauman, 2007; Shariff, 2008). The difference in these two definitions is the reference to 'negative actions' in the earlier definition and 'aggressive act or behaviour' in the latter. This difference is reconciled by Olweus (1993) when he explained the meaning of negative actions, which included aggressive behaviour and the infliction, or attempted infliction, of harm upon another person. It is widely accepted that 'aggression' is a negative action or behaviour, and that bullying is a subset of aggression (Hinduja and Patchin, 2008; Slonje and Smith, 2008). The main distinguishing characteristic between aggression and bullying is the criterion of power imbalance (Bauman *et al*., 2013).

It is widely accepted amongst scholars (see, for example Olweus, 1999; Smith *et al*., 2008; Wingate *et al*., 2013) that bullying has three key components:

- Intention: the bully should intend to cause harm to the victim.
- Repetition: the behaviour of the bully should be repeated.
- Imbalance of power: there should be a power differential or asymmetrical relationship between the bully and the victim, such that it is difficult for the victim to easily defend himself or herself.

Intention in relation to bullying refers to purposeful harm. That is to say that the

person carrying out the harmful act anticipates that detriment of some sort, whether physical or psychological, to be caused or experienced by the person being harmed. In an effort to distinguish bullying from banter, the DCSF (2009) suggested that if there is deliberate intention to hurt someone, and there is a power imbalance that makes it hard for the victim to defend himself or herself, and if it is repetitive, then it is bullying, rather than banter. It may not be bullying when all those involved consider it to be fun, however, if it causes someone to be upset, then it may be bullying (ibid). Intention to harm can be very clear to identify in some cases, such as repeatedly punching someone in order to cause them to feel physical pain. In other cases, however, intention may be difficult to establish: a claim may be made by the bully that no harm was intended, despite an act or behaviour causing harm to their victim. Alternatively, despite the intention of the bully to cause harm, the victim may not be harmed, or otherwise does not feel that they have been bullied.

A repeated act or behaviour suggests that bullying incidents recur over a period of time and are not a 'one-off' (Smith et al, 2013). Boyd (2014) argues that incidents that lack imbalance of power and lack repetition are:

> *hurtful acts of peer aggression, but they are not bullying.* (p.132)

The presence of repetition in bullying situations differentiates one-off incidents from those that are more systematic. In some situations, repetition can be clearly identified, such as the number of kicks or punches a victim receives, or the number of times someone is called a nasty name, as these can be counted. However, there is a lack of guidance in the literature in terms of whether repetition occurs from the actions of one person, or whether multiple persons act

only once. This causes problems in defining bullying, in terms of repetition, but also in measuring it and deciding whether or not bullying has occurred. Notably, the literature does not provide reasons as to why repetition is required for an incident to be regarded as bullying. This begs the question "*Why* isn't an incident such as being punched, kicked, or being called a name, *only once,* regarded as bullying?"

The DCSF (2009) recognised that various specific exceptions should *possibly* be made in satisfying the need for repetition for an incident to be termed bullying, so long as there was still an intention to harm and an imbalance of power. These cases relate to situations that are sexual, sexist, racist or homophobic in nature, and where disabilities are involved. Although these exceptions of repetition are important because of the relative seriousness of these specific types of bullying, the DCSF (ibid) did not provide their reasons for such departure in these circumstances. Issues relating to repetition in bullying are considered more as this thesis progresses.

In a bullying situation, it is claimed that one person has *more power* than the other. It is the abuse of this power that amounts to bullying and the creation of the bully/victim relationship. This power can manifest itself in terms of physical strength, or can be psychological, or social, for example being popular amongst peers (Olweus, 1993). This relative power imbalance, however manifested, results in the victim not being able to defend himself or herself easily. Thornberg and Knutsen (2011) claimed that if two people are similar in strength, then it is not bullying, but the researchers did not provide reasons for this claim. The researchers also claimed that if two friends both see the situation as a joke, then it

is also not bullying. However, the researchers did not consider the situation where two people are of similar strength, one teasing the other in a jovial manner, but where the recipient does not see it as a joke or banter. The researchers did not consider whether or not this particular situation should be treated as bullying, nor was it clear from the wider literature. This lack of clarity makes it difficult to establish the difference between that might be perception and what might be real from the perspectives from two people, who may be friends, involved in what might or might not be bullying. It is understandable though, given the difficulty of applying clear criteria to interaction and behaviour of this kind, why the meaning of bullying has changed over the centuries and why Shakespeare used the term *bully* to symbolise teasing and joking in a close friendship.

2.3 The Definition and Criteria of Cyberbullying

The process of defining cyberbullying can start with the definition of bullying, which then can be applied to the cyber context. In this way, cyberbullying has been defined by Smith *et al.* (2008, p. 376):

> *an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself.*

It is clear that when this definition is compared to the widely accepted definition of bullying considered earlier, the only difference and addition to the wording is *'using electronic forms of contact'*. Defining cyberbullying in this way shows a consistent approach with the structure of the definition of bullying.

Bill Belsey, a Canadian academic and politician, is popularised as being the first person to coin and define the term 'cyberbullying'. In 2003, Belsey (cited in Butler *et al*., 2010, p.1) defined cyberbullying as follows:

> *the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others.*

Belsey's definition of cyberbullying is used widely in academic and government literature (see, for example, Li, 2006; DCSF, 2009). Belsey's definition makes reference to the use of technology, as well as to intention and repetition. There are, however, two prima facie differences between these two definitions of cyberbullying considered so far: the first is that Belsey's definition does not make reference to a power imbalance, whilst the definition used by Wilton and Campbell (2011) does; and second, Belsey makes explicit reference to 'harm', whereas harm in the comparative definition is perhaps only implicated but it is not made explicit. By comparing these definitions, there are notable similarities and agreement, although these are not exact. Other definitions of cyberbullying lack even more detail, such as the definitions put forward and used by the following three scholars:

Li (2006, p.224):

> *Bullying via electronic communication tools*

Bauman (2010, p.803):

> *The use of technology to intentionally harm or harass others*

Drennan *et al*. (2011, p.296):

> *[Repeated misuse of] technology to harass, intimidate, bully or terrorise another person*

The definitions of cyberbullying considered thus far are recognised as being consistent insofar as they all make reference to technology or electronic

communication. Beyond this connection though, most but not all of the definitions make some reference to *harm*, whilst some make reference to *harassment*. This difference is important as harm can be seen as the outcome of harassment (which usually involves repetition), but a person can be harassed without being harmed, and vice versa, and so even though these terms are connected, they are not the same.

Definitions for cyberbullying can differ because they become obsolete due to changes in technology and through better understanding of this relatively new phenomenon. Wingate *et al.* (2013) admitted that research literature lacks a 'gold standard' operational definition of cyberbullying. The reasons behind why such a definition does not yet exist might be that cyberbullying has a complex nature and a fast pace of change as a research area. This, however, does not remove the need for a consistent and agreed upon definition of cyberbullying. It is important that a precise definition of cyberbullying is developed and agreed upon by researchers and policy makers, as this will guide theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Having said this, it is also important that definitions can, and do, evolve according to with technology and also with young people's behaviour. Furthermore, the definitions that are generated and developed should take account of young people's voices, as they are the ones who are *experiencing* this phenomenon.

Bauman *et al.* (2013), in an effort to move research on cyberbullying forward, offered a definition for 'cyber aggression':

> *Behaviour aimed at harming another person using electronic communications, and perceived as aversive by the target.* (p.41)

The researchers identified two criteria for aggression:

1. The behaviour is intended to cause harm, and
2. The victim feels hurt.

It is significant that repetition is not seen as a defining feature. The researchers recommended use of the term ‘cyber aggression’ over ‘cyberbullying’, claiming that the former is more easily defined and can be measured with precision. However, this may be addressing the difficulty of defining a concept by changing the label, not addressing the underlying issues. However, a comparison between cyberbullying and cyber aggression shows differences as well as similarities:

1. Both include the intent to cause harm.
2. Cyber aggression considers the behaviour from the victim’s point of view, whilst cyberbullying tends not to make any such explicit reference. The significance of this is in the voice of the victims, which is explained in more detail when discussing phenomenology.
3. Cyber aggression does not make explicit reference to an imbalance of power, but is a criterion used in some cyberbullying definitions.
4. Cyber aggression does not make any reference at all to repetition, but this is a criterion used in some cyberbullying definitions.

Although the researchers saw ‘cyber aggression’ as a way of progressing research in this area, the term is not widely used and has not helped address issues in defining and establishing accurate criteria to measure cyberbullying. The way the criteria of bullying apply to cyberbullying is now considered.

2.3.1 Intention

As discussed above, a person's intent to cause harm can be difficult to determine. When technology is introduced, however, it can be even more difficult to distinguish between the intent to do harm and what is intended only as a joke. This is because there may be a lack of social cues to gauge someone's facial expression or reaction to something that is said or written. Emoticons (for example, ☺ ☹) and widely used truncations, such as 'LOL' (laugh out loud) and 'ROFL' (rolling on floor laughing), can be used to indicate the joviality of a text message or an email, but their uses are not definitive, exact or universal. Furthermore, the use of such words or emoticons may have a sinister connotation and add to the intention to cause harm. In other cases, it could be that no harm was intended on the part of the sender, despite the person being conscious of their behaviour (Munro, 2011).

In Cross *et al*. (2009), 41% of cyberbullies in their research reported targeting their victim for revenge or retaliation, whereas a further 40% did it as a joke and did not intend to harm anyone. What can be seen from these figures is that self-reporting cyberbullies indicated, at similar rates, different motivations for their behaviour. Mark and Radcliffe (2011) found 17% of cyberbullies did not realise that their behaviour would cause harm, and Wingate *et al*. (2013) found only 5% of cyberbullies intended to cause harm, with 95% seeing their behaviour as humorous or harmless. The reasons and motivations for cyberbullying are dealt with in greater detail later on in the literature review, but what is clear from these studies is that the researchers considered the intention of harm (or otherwise) from the cyberbullies' perspective rather than from the victims'.

The impersonal nature of technology may mean those who send messages do not intend to harm the receivers or to cause any distress. In determining intention, Bauman *et al*. (2013) suggested that the views of the victim, perpetrator and a reasonable person should be taken into account. This point is important to the phenomenological framework of this research, as importance is placed on the lived experiences of the participants. A cybervictim might not experience harm from an obvious act of aggression, and a cyberbully might deny outright their behaviour or may not have meant to cause harm. An objective person, however, would:

> *Judge that the action could be foreseen as likely to cause harm to the intended recipient* (Smith et al, 2013, in Bauman *et al*., 2013, p.30).

The issue with using such as objective person, however, is with the interpretation and application of relatively subjective criteria.

Cross *et al.* (2009, p.17) referred to what the cyberbully might perceive as being a joke but is taken seriously by the cybervictim as an 'intention gap'. The difference in the perception of the cyberbully and cybervictim of whether harm was intended, and whether harm was caused, is difficult to determine in cyberbullying, and this makes it harder to know what the reality is. However, there are clear ends of the continuum between calling someone a hurtful name in the heat of the moment and posting a sexually suggestive image on the internet that is then shared with thousands of other people as a form of revenge.

2.3.2 Repetition

With cyberbullying, the apparent requirement of repetition is further complicated by the use of technology. This is because one message or image can be replicated and subsequently distributed to others using technology. This distribution, or at least the extent, might be outside the control or intent of the original sender (Dooley *et al*., 2009). An example is that a photo uploaded online only once by the cyberbully can be seen by many people, or can be distributed, copied and uploaded multiple times by many other people (Ševčíková *et al*., 2012). Slonje *et al.* (2013, p.245) refer to this process as 'snowball[ing]'. The issue here is how the number of occurrences of cyberbullying are counted: is each person forwarding the message involved as a cyberbully or in another way? Are they creating and adding to repeat offences? Or is it the case that only the original sender engaged in activity with the same target is required in order for bullying to be qualified? It is somewhat surprising that these questions have not been answered in the literature, especially given clear importance placed on being able to recognise and accurately measure a phenomenon that is the focus of increasing amounts of academic research.

It is important to discuss and critique the requirement and treatment of repetition as a criterion in measuring cyberbullying as this affects how it is defined, perceived and interpreted by academics, policy makers, practitioners, bullies and victims. A single incident of bullying, offline or online, can have a devastating effect on those who are targeted (Dooley *et al*., 2009). For example, an anonymous person who posts a message to a target, such as, *I am going to kill*

you, should be regarded as bullying (Bauman *et al*., 2013). Instances like this—which notably instil fear and anxiety—can cause long-term problems for victims.

2.3.3 Imbalance of Power

The use of technology can create a different perspective in terms of power asymmetries in cyberbullying. This is especially true where the identity of the bully is obscured, and signifiers such as physical size and general appearance are not known and may be irrelevant in determining cyberbullying behaviour. Instead, power differences in cyberbullying situations can be gained through proficiency with technology, a feeling of inescapability, and by being anonymous (Menesini and Spiel, 2012). Indicatively, Slonje *et al.* (2013) and Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) identified those with greater internet skills to be more likely to have engaged in cyberbullying. This may not necessarily apply to simple acts, such as sending text messages, but would be more applicable in terms of setting up fake profiles and hacking social networking accounts. Anonymity is widely cited as a potential feature of communications technology that can generate a power asymmetry in cyberbullying situations (Heirman and Walrave, 2008; Smith *et al*., 2008). This can cause distress to victims, as well as feelings of fear and anxiety, as they may worry about whom is targeting them.

Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) suggested the possibility of a victim of offline bullying who might be physically weaker could become a cyberbully as a form of revenge, as technology can provide them with anonymity, allowing them to gain power in this way. The imbalance of power in cyberbullying therefore is psychological and avoids the physical dimension, which can be a feature of offline bullying. Online though, the power imbalance is not immediately obvious.

Additionally, the potential of material posted online and be distributed to many people can also add to the power imbalance because of the lack of control of the target to get the material removed quickly, or at all (Dooley *et al*., 2009).

2.3.4 The Use of Technology

The use of communications technology to carry out bullying behaviours can enable aspects that are either different or not apparent in offline bullying contexts. These are: anonymity, disinhibition, power asymmetry, and bystanders.

Technology can enable people to remain *anonymous*; by being able to disguise or conceal their identity, a person can create digital invisibility that provides them with a level of protection behind the screen of the technology they are using (Shariff, 2008). This can be done by a person creating pseudonyms, fake email addresses and using social networking sites that do not require users to register any personal details. This makes it possible for a victim to be in very close proximity to the cyberbully, who discretely and surreptitiously sends messages to them (Heirman and Walrave, 2008). The cyberbully can hide their identity from anyone and everyone, and such a platform is therefore ideal for bullying someone if a person wishes to withhold his or her identity.

Using technology can cause people to be *disinhibited*. Beale and Hall (2007) described online disinhibition as people in the cyber world saying and doing things that they would not normally say and do in the offline world. This can be owing to the physical and emotional proximity being reduced, and/or because of anonymity. *Cyber disinhibition*, a term coined by Daniel Goleman (2006)—a psychologist and expert on emotional intelligence—can affect a person's moral

conscience, owing to being online. Therefore, users may feel protected by a digital disguise, which provides them with the channel, opportunity and means to carry out cyberbullying behaviours that might not be possible or even attempted in the offline world (Ackers, 2012). This could provide an avenue through which a physically weaker person, or someone of a lower social status, who might not risk bullying someone offline, to capitalise on the anonymity that the internet can provide in order to cyberbully a physically stronger person. In this way, a person's behaviour can be seen to change between offline and online contexts; they can be seen to be disinhibited by communications technology and feel confident to go that step further online, which they may have avoided if the same situation occurred offline. Consequently, the cyberbully may have reduced empathy because they cannot see for themselves, as they might in the offline world, the impact inflicted upon the victim. This might mean the cyberbully continues their behaviour, which can cause the victim further distress.

The *power differential* in cyberbullying situations can lie in the anonymity of users, as outlined above. Victims of offline bullying may find it easier to retaliate or stand up for themselves using technology, because of the ability to be anonymous. It is important to note that the reaction of the victim could be cyberbullying in its own right and therefore victims might also be cyberbullies. Furthermore, if the victim, being disinhibited, targets their bully online, and the bully finds out or knows the identity of the victim, this could make the victim's experience worse in offline contexts as well as online. This is especially true if there are many bystanders.

The role of *bystanders* can be passive or active (Campbell, 2005). Passive bystanders are those that witness the bullying, adopting an observational role, without taking further action or getting involved. Such bystanders might fear retribution from the bully if they were to intervene, or risk becoming a target themselves if they became involved or tried to help the victim. If bystanders do not feel confident intervening, or think others might, then the impact on the victim is potentially more harmful and the bully might feel even more powerful owing to the lack of action being taken against them (Blandford, 2015c).

Active bystanders, or bullies by proxy, tend to be more involved in some way. On Twitter, for example, it is possible to 'retweet' (forward on to others) a message so as to enable and encourage further distribution of the message. Similarly, those on Facebook who 'like' a hostile message, or 'share' the comment with others are examples of active bystanders. The actions of bystanders can therefore play a pivotal role in stopping or facilitating the spread of cyberbullying messages or images as each has a choice of whether or not to forward, upload or copy the content, or to join in with an exchange online.

Depending on the actions of the cyberbully and bystanders, online bullying content can be capable of potentially universal distribution. Targets of offline, school-based bullying may regard home as a place of refuge and a sanctuary to escape being bullying. In contrast, victims of cyberbullying may not feel that they can escape or retreat so easily from being targeted (Shariff, 2008). Cyberbullying can occur anywhere where there is ready access to technology—at school, at home, on the streets—and at any time of the day or night, in term time or holiday time, as well as from, and in, any part of the world (Atkinson, 2008). The apparent

inseparability of a mobile phone and its owner—owing to the importance it is assigned in their social and personal lives—makes it possible for perpetual bullying to take place (Heirman and Walrave, 2008). It is possible for an image, message, post or video clip to be distributed by phone, email or through uploading it to the internet for people to view and share. The distribution of online bullying content is difficult to control—perhaps beyond the initial intentions of the original perpetrator, as discussed.

2.4 Types of Bullying and Cyberbullying Behaviours

There are two categories of bullying, broadly labelled as *direct* and *indirect* (Kowalski, 2008). Direct bullying can adopt different forms: physical, for example, kicking or punching; 'behavioural', for example, stealing someone's lunch; or verbal, for example, teasing, name-calling and insults (Dooley *et al*., 2009; Pornari and Wood, 2010). Direct forms of cyberbullying involve the bully making direct contact with their victim, through the use of technology, such as by sending a nasty text message to them.

Indirect bullying is relational or socially oriented, which involves, for example, excluding someone from events or groups, and spreading rumours about someone to other people. The aim of indirect bullying can be to damage peer relationships and the social status of a person (Riebel *et al*., 2009). Indirect cyberbullying, or cyberbullying by proxy, can include actions such as gaining access to a person's email account or social networking page with a view to sending messages to other people purporting to be the victim, or to block access to the person's account so that it cannot be used (Mark and Ratcliffe, 2011). An example of this type of behaviour is colloquially termed 'fraping' (verb: to frape someone), a portmanteau

of Facebook and rape/raping, which involves a person gaining unauthorised access to another's Facebook account and posting messages to others or on their 'status wall' as if they were from the account holder. Within friendship circles, this behaviour can be comical (although note the earlier discussion surrounding the circumstances where this may be unclear and the difference between what is *perceived* as real and what *is* real), but where there is aggressive intent behind the behaviour it can be damaging, as the target has no control over how their social networking account is used. In this way, a cyberbully is able to gain and exercise power.

Researchers such as Blumenfeld and Cooper (2010) and Norman and Connolly (2011) described different cyberbullying behaviours, which can also determine or affect the actual content or focus of a cyberbullying situation:

- *Harassment*: Content that can include threats of harm or is highly intimidating.
- *Denigration*: Put downs or 'trolling', involving sending or posting harmful, untrue or cruel statements about a person to other people.
- *Masquerade*: Sending or posting content pretending to be someone else. The earlier example of Fraping would be an example of masquerade.
- *Outing* and *trickery*: Involves engaging in tricks to solicit sensitive or embarrassing information or images that is then made public by sending the material to others or posting it online.
- *Flaming*: Sending angry messages directed at a person online.
- *Exclusion*: Actions that intentionally exclude a person from an online group. This is a social/relational form of cyberbullying.

Kowalski *et al.* (2008) added *happy slapping* to this list, which involves recording violence on a mobile phone and then posting it online where it can be viewed and shared by others. *Sexting* (a portmanteau of 'sex' and 'texting') is another category of behaviour that may be cyberbullying, if non-consensual, which involves creating and sending sexual content, including images, and which may be distributed by others, often to the extent that the victim has not given consent (Phippin, 2012).

Outlining these categories of cyberbullying is important as they illustrate the spectrum of cyberbullying behaviours. Furthermore, they reveal some of the content and context of what cyberbullying is about, as well as to suggest the root motivations of the behaviour. The different motivations and types of cyberbully are discussed later on in this chapter.

2.5 The Prevalence of Cyberbullying

The first known, reported research of cyberbullying in the UK was conducted by the National Children's Home (NCH, 2002, as cited in Li, 2007a), which was the first organisation to take up the issue of cyberbullying on a national level after pinpointing text bullying as a new and modern problem. This research reported that 25% of 11–19 year olds were victims of cyberbullying, whilst 11% engaged in cyberbullying others. Neither the sample size nor the definition of cyberbullying used in the research was reported. In 2005, in partnership with Tesco Mobile, the NCH (2005) surveyed 770 young people aged 11–19 years old, 97% of whom owned a mobile phone. The research found that 20% of the sample reported experiencing 'some sort of digital bullying' (p.3), which was lower than in their 2002 research. The cyber-perpetration rate—where respondents admitted

to sending ‘a bullying or threatening message to someone else’ (p.3)—was 11%, notably consistent with their 2002 research. In the 2005 study, the researchers defined ‘text bullying’ as follows:

> *One or more unwelcome text messages that the recipient finds threatening, or causes discomfort in some way* (p.3).

The choice of wording in the definition is important to consider; there is no reference to power imbalance, although this may be implied, but reference is made to repetition and to causing harm. Interestingly, the researchers use a definition that does not require more than one incident to qualify as text bullying, which is seemingly inconsistent with the apparent requirement of repetition, considered earlier. The definition is also narrow in that it only considered text messaging, which could have affected the prevalence rate reported, as other modalities, such as email and chatrooms were available at the time this study was conducted. However, this focus is understandable given the business context of Tesco *Mobile.*

The definition of—or even the use of the term—‘cyberbullying’ is not consistent across a number of studies in the field. For example, Mishna *et al.* (2010, p.364) asked participants to consider their ‘online behaviour’, but they may not have considered their behaviour as constituting ‘cyberbullying’ as this term was not explicitly mentioned. Consequently, Mishna *et al.* (2010) reported a high rate of cyber victimisation (49.5%) and cyber perpetration (33.7%). The definition of cyberbullying provided can influence the prevalence level, for example by including or excluding some aspect of it. Ofsted (2012) did not define bullying in their research, stating it was important to consider what pupils who had

experienced such interactions defined as bullying for themselves. However, measuring bullying or cyberbullying without providing participants without some general guidance as to the meanings of the terms could affect the validity of the research.

The conceptual gap between researchers and participants concerning what cyberbullying means and how it is measured may also explain the differences in prevalence rates. In the absence (or even inclusion) of a definition, the perception of the participant in terms of what may be defined as cyberbullying, both in regard to victimisation and perpetration, may be different. For example, a participant who has been called a nasty name once may consider this cyberbullying (and maybe it is), but the name caller might not consider their behaviour as such. Alternatively, there may be some researchers who might discount this particular incident on the basis that there is no repetition. The perspective of an alleged bully might be that the alleged victim is sensitive, and a particular situation might have been intended as banter rather than intent to do harm, as discussed.

Ybarra and Mitchell (2004, p.1308) used 'aggression' as a measure rather than 'cyberbullying', and a timescale of 'in the previous year'. They found that, of 1,501 participants in the USA aged 10–17 years, 4% had been a victim of aggression. This rate is lower than both NCH studies, but Ybarra and Mitchell (ibid) measured *aggression* as opposed to cyberbullying, which was what they claimed to be investigating in their research. The researchers also reported that 12% of their sample admitted to being *aggressive* towards someone else. This is similar to Campbell (2005), who reported a cyber perpetration rate of 11%, and is also consistent with the studies considered above. This shows the uniformity of

cyber perpetration across studies so far, both in the UK and Australia. Campbell (ibid) surveyed 120 pupils aged 12 and 13 years old from Australia, 14% of whom reported being a victim of cyberbullying.

In their research in the UK, Smith *et al.* (2006), considered a wider, yet still exclusive, list of four technological modalities: email, text message, phone call and video clip. They asked their 92 participants aged 11–16 years old, enrolled across 14 schools in England, to consider whether they had been cyberbullied by any of the four listed mediums 'at least once…over the last couple of months' (p.2). Notably, the inclusion of 'at least once' goes against the requirement of repetition that many researchers advocate as part of the criteria of bullying. This inclusion of *at lea*st *once* can lead to tensions with the theoretical framework used for determining what constitutes cyberbullying. However, the researchers did provide the frequency categories of 'at least once' and '2–3 times per month' (ibid) for participants to select and reported both sets of findings. Such categorisation is valuable in so far as a distinction can be made between those who have been cyberbullied *only* once—and therefore not meeting the repetition criterion claimed in the literature—and those who have been repeatedly targeted. The researchers found 22% of their sample had been targeted at least once, and 6.6% had been more frequent targets. The difference in these prevalence rates reinforces the importance of researchers being clear with how they define and measure cyberbullying, since if those experiences of *only once* were discounted on the basis of a lack of repetition, then the implication would have been a lower prevalence rate and most of the cybervictims' voices and experiences would have been lost in measurement criteria.

Research carried out in the USA by Patchin and Hinduja (2006), involving 384 participants under the age of 18, revealed a cyber perpetration rate of 11%, which is comparable to studies considered so far, and a cyber victimisation rate of 29%. The rate of victimisation is relatively higher, however, this could be due to the researchers' methodology: the researchers posted their survey as a link on the website of a popular female vocalist, and they were open to anyone responding. This convenience sample might have led people who had been affected by cyberbullying to take part—and therefore could have biased the results. This was recognised by the researchers in the limitations to their study.

Research by Slonje and Smith (2008) reported an overall prevalence of cyber perpetration of 10.3%. The researchers surveyed 360 adolescents in Sweden, made up of 210 in secondary school and 150 in sixth form college. The researchers asked participants to consider their experiences 'in the last couple of months' (p.150), which coincided with the start of the school year, since the questionnaire was distributed in November. The modalities of cyberbullying considered in this research were limited to text message, email, phone calls and picture/video clips. The researchers intentionally limited their consideration to these methods following the relatively high prevalence rates through these methods in the work of Smith *et al.* (2006). This meant that other categories, such as chat rooms, instant messaging and websites, were not included owing to the researchers' view of the apparently low incidence levels of these methods, combined with the desire to keep the questionnaire at an appropriate length. However, this represented a missed opportunity in collecting data on a wider range of modalities used in cyberbullying.

The overall perpetration rate in Slonje and Smith (2008) of 10.3% was an aggregation of 11.9% amongst secondary school pupils (aged 12-15 years) and 8% of sixth form students (aged 15-20 years – it is possible to start sixth form in Sweden at age 15). With regard to cybervictims, the researchers reported an overall prevalence rate of 11.7% (an aggregation of 17.6% amongst secondary school pupils and 3.3% amongst sixth form students). These findings show prevalence rates for both cyber perpetration and cyber victimisation as lower amongst sixth form students when compared with secondary school pupils. Slonje and Smith (2008) argued that the reason for this was that those in sixth form were more interested in educational achievement. On this, they commented:

> *By this stage in education, only students interested in educational achievement are more likely to be attending…combined with the general age decline in reported victim rates, suggests that the problem is much more acute during the period of compulsory schooling, even for cyberbullying that escapes the school boundaries* (p.152).

This comments suggests that age is a factor in bullying and cyberbullying; this is considered in more detail below in a separate section. Since Slonje and Smith (2008) conducted their research, the age of education participation has increased, and despite theirs being a Swedish study, the claim that those attending post-16 education are more interested in educational achievement and how this relates to prevalence of cyberbullying is an interesting one to investigate. This is because even though this claim may hold true, it may not be the case for all that attend college now, since they may be reluctant learners who now *must* participate in further education, as it is now compulsory, rather than *having* to for progression

into higher education, or *wanting* to for the experience. In any case, Slonje and Smith's (2008) research is important as sixth form students were included and their involvement in cyberbullying was reported separately. This is a rare and unfortunate feature in the literature reviewed.

In the USA, Englander (2009) considered both high school students (14-18 years old) and 'college' students (18 – 22 years old, UK equivalent of university) in their investigation into cyberbullying. The findings indicated that cyberbullying others and being a cyber victim occurred less in older age groups; however, this research considered only *instant messenger* (IM) as the modality for cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied. The prevalence rates reported for cyberbullying others was 23% of high school students and 3% for college students. In relation to being cyberbullied, 36% of high school students were cybervictims compared with a lower rate of 8% for college students. The prevalence rates reported in the research were not disaggregated into specific ages, making it difficult to determine the extent to which 16–19 year olds experienced cyberbullying as either a victim or perpetrator.

Englander stated that she was 'surprised' (p.8) to find that cyberbullying had followed young people from high school to college at this rate, as she did not anticipate it would. Englander (2009) hypothesised that the maturity of students in college compared to those in high school might be a reason for the reduced prevalence rate in victimisation. Englander (2009, p.8) commented:

> *While the frequency of cyberbullying diminished significantly following high school, it did not cease entirely.*

The age and relative maturity of participants could be one factor that explains the differences in prevalence rates across studies. The context in which the learning takes place is also important to consider as those who progress their education from secondary school into college also change education environments, but the impact of this factor has not been the focus of a separate investigation. This is one reason why the scope of this thesis considers only post-16 institutions that are separate from secondary schools. In recognising the limitations of the research, Englander (2009) stated that the findings should only be seen as suggestive, as the absolute number of cyberbullies was only 10 for college students, out of 330 students in college that participated.

In 2009, Cross *et al.* (2009) published their findings from the first Virtual Violence study conducted by the (former) charity 'BeatBullying'. This research involved collecting data from 2,094 secondary school children aged 11–16 years old in England. Overall, 33% reported to cyberbullying someone, whilst 30% reported being a victim of cyberbullying. In an attempt to estimate cyberbullying prevalence on a national scale, the researchers extrapolated their findings. They used these figures to suggest that, of around 4,424,000 children in the UK aged 11–16, 1,327,000 have been cyberbullied, with one quarter of these (331,800) experiencing *persistent* cyberbullying (Cross *et al*., 2009, emphasis added). The researchers described persistent cyberbullying as lasting one or more years.

Three years later, in 2012, BeatBullying published their second Virtual Violence study (Cross *et al*., 2012). In this research, the researchers surveyed 4,600 school children aged 11–16 years old in England. The researchers asked participants whether they had been 'deliberately targeted, threatened or humiliated by an

individual or group through the use of mobile phones or the internet.' (p.6). The researchers found 17% had cyberbullied others and 28% reported being a cybervictim, of which 23% of victim had experienced persistent victimisation. The overall cyber victimisation rate in this research represented a 2% decrease from their 2009 research, but in relation to cyberbullying perpetration, a more marked reduction was reported from the 2009 research, from 33% to 17%. The researchers suggested this difference might have been attributable to adolescents believing cyberbullying to be more socially unacceptable. However, this research alone did not provide conclusive evidence that the perpetration of cyberbullying was decreasing. It might have been the case that fewer participants admitted to perpetrating cyberbullying others, again due to the fact that they felt it was more socially unacceptable. Another explanation might have been the work of organisations attempting to reduce cyberbullying could be having an impact, although, this too, is speculation.

One of the highest rates in the literature of those reporting being cyberbullied was Tarapdar and Kellett (2011). The researchers found that 38% of 1,282 school-aged children in the UK in their sample reported being affected by cyberbullying as *either a victim or a witness*. Cyber perpetration was not measured, without any information provided as to why. The researchers recognised that this prevalence rate was higher than in other studies. This was not surprising when considering that the researchers adopted a different, wider measure; rather than measuring whether or not participants had been cyberbullied, they instead measured their *exposure* to cyberbullying (as a victim or witness). The researchers justified this measure as it:

> *captured behaviour undermining aspects of well-being embedded in [the participants'] environment such as; pressures, circumstances, networks, self-perceptions and quality of relationships with peers* (p.18).

The researchers did not disaggregate their findings into those who had been victims of cyberbullying from those who had witnessed it. Such a feature made comparison more difficult with other studies.

Further studies also indicated relatively higher levels of prevalence. In Canada, Beran and Li (2007) used a self-completion questionnaire to survey 432 school children aged 12–15, which, amongst other questions, asked, 'Have harassing behaviours involving technology been directed towards you?' (p.6), to which 58% participants answered 'yes' in regard to events occurring at least once. In terms of measuring perpetration, the researchers asked participants to answer the question, 'Do you use technology to harass others?' (ibid), to which 26% answered 'yes'. However, the researchers measured harassment rather than cyberbullying, or at least made use of this terminology, and this could have affected how participants responded. Nevertheless, the researchers conflated the terms *cyberbullying* and *harassment* in their paper. Researchers need to ensure they are providing an appropriate definition that measures what they are claiming and seeking to measure. Such as approach adds to the overall validity of the research, and would facilitate more reliable comparisons between studies. High prevalence rates such as this were not so rare in the literature, as the following studies illustrate.

In Turkey, Aricak (2009) surveyed 695 undergraduates aged between 18 and 22 years old and found that 54.4% were cyberbullied 'at least once in their lifetime' (p.171) and 19.7% admitted to cyberbullying others in their lifetime. This relatively high prevalence level can be attributed—at least in some part—to

measuring the *lifetime* experience of cyberbullying, rather than, for example, *in the last couple of months.* Clearly, stark differences in measures such as these are likely to have an impact on findings. The time of year at which data were collected might also affect the prevalence rate: for example, participants who are asked to consider 'the last 2–3 months' since September might answer differently to if they are/were asked to consider the same time period if the research had started in March, as in NCH (2005) or June, as in Smith *et al.* (2008) above. This may be because of the cycle of the academic year, and also that the development or breakdown of peer relationships throughout the course of the academic year might need time to occur. The use of different time periods to measure cyberbullying makes proper comparison between studies difficult.

Further studies of cyberbullying also highlighted inconsistencies in prevalence rates, and differences in the measures and timescales used. In an effort to illustrate this, Hinduja and Patchin (2012) randomly surveyed 4,400 participants aged 11–18 years old in the USA and found 20% had been cyberbullied *at some point in their lives*. This contrasts with research in the same year by Slonje *et al.* (2012), who found that 10.6% of their sample reported being a victim of cyberbullying whilst 9.6% reported being a cyberbully *in the last 2–3 months*, which notably coincided with the start of the school year.

Vazsonyi *et al.* (2012) surveyed 25,142 school children aged between 9 and 16 years old across 25 European countries. Surprisingly, the researchers did not report prevalence figures for cyber victimisation or cyber perpetration in their research. They stated in their report:

> *The rates of cyberbullying perpetration and victimization were not the goal of this article, and we do not report them because of space constraints* (ibid, p.217).

This was an unhelpful feature of this article, as the reporting of prevalence levels would have enabled comparisons to be made with other studies. A cursory online search for further details of this research revealed that the overall prevalence rate for cyber victimisation was 7%, using a time period of *over the last year*. However, no information was found for the findings of each country. Furthermore, the researchers missed the opportunity to collect data from those aged over 16 years old, which would have been beneficial to include, given the relatively large scale of the research.

Prevalence has become a contentious issue. Olweus (2012a), in his article entitled 'Cyberbullying: An Over-rated Phenomenon', used data from very large samples: 450,490 students aged 7–18 years old across 1,349 schools in the USA, and 9,000 students from Norway, aged 11–16 years old. Olweus argued that claims made about cyberbullying in the media and research were greatly exaggerated and based on little empirical support. Olweus suggested that cyberbullying, when studied in a proper context, was a low-prevalence phenomenon. Cyberbullying was defined for participants as:

> *bullying performed via electronic means such as mobile/cell phones or the internet* (p.521).

This definition omits the criteria of bullying to which Olweus subscribed in his earlier research (see Olweus, 1993; 1999). The table of data below summarises the research upon which Olweus based his claims.

Table 2: Prevalence of cyberbullying in USA and Norway

	Prevalence (%): USA				Prevalence (%): Norway				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Cyberbully	2.9	2.7	2.5	3.2	1.6	1.4	1.7	1.2	1.1
Cybervictim	4.1	4.5	4.3	5	3.6	3.2	4.2	3.3	2.9

Adapted from Olweus (2012a, p.527)

The prevalence rates in the table above represent the lowest levels reported in this literature review. In response to this article by Olweus, Hinduja and Patchin (2012, p.541) argued that Olweus' findings above were

> *simply out of line with the weight of available evidence.*

Hinduja and Patchin's claim was based on a review of 27 peer-reviewed journal articles, in which they calculated the average cyber victimisation rate as being 24.4% (with a range from 5.5% to 72%) whilst the average cyber perpetration rate was found to be 18% (with a range from 3% to 44.1%).

In response to Hinduja and Patchin (2012), Olweus (2012b) asserted

> *like must be compared with like.* (p.561)

Accordingly, Olweus criticises the researchers' earlier study (see Hinduja and Patchin, 2008) for measuring *lifetime prevalence* rather than *the most recent couple of months*, which was the timescale Olweus used in his research above. In further trying to further understand the differences, apart from the effect that the varying timescales had on the findings, one might also comment on the time period considered: Olweus used findings from 2006–2010 and Hinduja and Patchin reviewed articles up to only 2005. Such is not a like for like comparison.

During the period October 2013–February 2014, the anti-bullying charity Ditch the Label (2014), surveyed 3,616 participants aged 13–18 years old across 37

schools and colleges in the UK (36% of participants were college students). The researchers found that 45% of participants experienced bullying, and of these, 55% experienced cyberbullying. These percentages suggest that 25% of the sample experienced cyberbullying, although the researchers did not report this finding separately. The researchers asked participants to rate the frequency of their experience on a scale of 1–10 (1 being 'never', 5 being 'often', and 10 being 'highly frequent'). Participants who selected anywhere between 2–10 on the scale were counted as being a victim of cyberbullying. This scale was subjective; it did not refer to the *number* of occurrences. Furthermore, there was no timescale set in this survey, thus it was not clear how recent or how long ago the participants had been targeted or what time period they were considering, which could have varied between participants. Another limitation of the research was that cyberbullying experiences were not analysed by age, which represented a missed opportunity, given that 36% of those who participated studied at colleges, and the age range of the study included those from 13-18 years old.

Overall, the literature points to a problem worth investigating in relation to prevalence. Cyberbullying happens and it is happening to a lot of young people in education, regardless of the methodological and conceptual differences that have been highlighted. However, the prevalence of cyber perpetration and cyber victimisation are not clear. The variation of prevalence levels can be confusing and can ultimately lead to distrust of the data in the studies. The differences in prevalence rates can be attributed to a number of different factors, such as how cyberbullying was defined and measured, the time period considered (e.g. over 'the last 2 months' or 'the last year'), and how data were collected. In the studies considered, there are also differences with the age of the participants and the

sample size, which could also go some way to explaining the varying prevalence rates. The differences in prevalence rates might be attributed to *multiple* factors, not just one, thus making them more difficult to reconcile. Therefore, it is important that researchers are explicit with their methods and procedures so that differences can be reconciled with more accuracy.

2.6 Demographics of Young People Involved in Cyberbullying

The wider research literature on bullying and cyberbullying has explored various demographics, most notably age and gender, and considered the relationship between these variables as predictors or determinants of cyber perpetration and cyber victimisation. Such relationships can highlight particular groups that are disproportionately engaged in cyberbullying as cyberbullies or cybervictims. The groups considered below are: age (along with educational context), gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability, since these were most prominent in the literature.

2.6.1 Age and Educational Context

In one of the earliest studies to be identified that considered college as a context in bullying research, McDougall (1999) suggested that although bullying tended to be associated more with children in primary and secondary schools, bullying was a phenomenon that existed in all stages of education and life. McDougall remarked that although it could be argued that bullying decreased with age, it still happened within post-16 education. McDougall believed that the general view of adults was that, as a child got older, he or she should be able to deal with bullying without help. On this point, McDougall (ibid, p.32) remarked that this unhelpful perception could:

mask the true extent of bullying, especially regarding the 16 to 18 year old student who is now perceived as an adult in an adult environment

Researchers such as Whitney and Smith (1993) found in a survey of school children that being a victim of bullying declined as the children got older and progressed though schooling: 35% of primary school children reported being a victim of bullying, whereas this was 17% for secondary school pupils and 0% for 16–18 year olds. The reasons the researchers provided for this drop included the fact that the school system was no longer compulsory; hence, the worst offenders, and victims, may not have continued their education; and that victims did not continue schooling with the same peers, and therefore got a fresh start at college.

McDougall (1999) randomly selected and surveyed 500 students aged 16–18 at the college in which she worked. A definition of bullying was not provided so as to allow students to form their own concept of bullying and not to exclude experiences not falling within a general definition. Placing importance on the views of participants' view and experiences in this way is central to the phenomenological approach used in this thesis, which is explained later in the methodology chapter. McDougall found that 9.6% of students reported being bullied, a figure that was far from negligible.

The 16–19 age range, as discussed previously, has not been afforded adequate attention in the research literature. Age is an important demographic to consider because it is associated with many psychological, behavioural, emotional and physical changes and development (Byron, 2009). Older adolescents are seen as wanting a great deal more independence and autonomy from their parents. Further, older teenagers are more willing and able to explore different roles and

try on new identities in order to find who they are as a person, and could represent risk factors in becoming a cyberbully or cybervictim. An example of this is that a person could join in a discussion thread on a Facebook post by giving an opinion on a topic, and then targeted by other Facebook users by the way they look or be called nasty racist names for their views on immigration policy. Nonetheless, Ackers (2012) suggested that 11–18 year olds were more vulnerable to being cyberbullied because of their attraction to technology and their growing need for interaction and socialisation, although this by itself does not explain *why* this age group becomes a cybervictim or a cyberbully, other than to suggest than more time spent online is a risk factor.

A limited number of studies have considered age as a factor when investigating bullying and cyberbullying. For example, Bauman and Pero (2010) found that being a victim of both bullying and cyberbullying increased with age, with the highest rates reported being amongst 14 year olds. Support for this finding was found in Slonje *et al.* (2012) who found that the greatest incidence of cyberbullying occurred amongst children aged 13–15 year olds. Further, Wilton and Campbell (2011) found that bullying and cyberbullying perpetration were most common amongst those aged 14 years old and 15 years old, respectively. The findings of Wilton and Campbell (ibid), which involved 400 participants aged 12-17 years old, from 3 private schools, randomly selected from 20 schools, are shown in the table below. This table also indicates that 14 year olds were mostly involved as *both* bullies and cyberbullies, demonstrating the same increasing then decreasing pattern.

Table 3: Age comparisons of being a bully and cyberbully

Age	Participants		Bully		Cyberbully		Both bully and cyberbully	
	N	%	N	%	n	%	N	%
12	39	9.8	4	10.3	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
13	142	35.5	22	15.5	2	1.4	3	2.1
14	121	30.3	26	21.5	3	2.5	10	8.3
15	89	22.3	13	14.6	3	3.4	1	1.1
16	6	1.5	2	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
17	3	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	400	100	67	16.8	8	2.0	14	3.5

Adapted from Wilton and Campbell (2011)

The researchers found that 2% (n=8) of 400 participants were cyberbullies. Although the rate for cyberbullying others was low, the sample size was also low, with only nine participants in total aged 16 and 17 years old. Thus, the prevalence rate of 16 year olds engaging in bullying at a rate of 33.3% was distorted. Details of how participants were selected within the schools was not made explicit, which could indicate sampling bias. An interesting feature in the researchers' methodology was the decision to survey students in private schools. This feature of their research is important as it highlights the opportunity and need to survey, and subsequently compares findings of bullying and cyberbullying from different institution types so as to establish whether there was the presence of any interesting relationships. Despite the different prevalence levels across these age groups, the researchers did not find a statistically significant relationship between perpetration and age for either bullying or cyberbullying. The researchers did not collect data on those who were bullied or cyberbullied, which represented a missed opportunity in data collection.

Cross *et al.* (2009) provided data on the prevalence of cyber victimisation of 11–16 year olds in their research, as tabled below.

Table 4: Percentage of each age experiencing isolated and persistent victimisation

Age of participant	Isolated cyber victimisation (%)	Persistent cyber victimisation (%)
11	12.0	6.0
12	14.0	5.5
13	16.0	9.0
14	17.0	10.0
15	20.5	8.5
16	21.0	9.5

Adapted from Cross et al (2009, p.22)

The data in the table shows that isolated cyberbullying incidents tends to increase with age, thus suggesting that, as young people got older, they were more likely to become victims of cyberbullying. In relation to persistent cyber victimisation, there was a fluctuating relationship with age, peaking at 14 years old, although there is less variation in the percentages. The researchers also did not collect any data pertaining to cyberbullying perpetration in terms of age. Without this information, it was not possible to determine the relationship between the age of the victim and of the bullies, in terms of whether or not older pupils were being cyberbullied by older or younger pupils.

Guerra *et al.* (2011) suggested that bullying peaked during early adolescence and declined in later years, citing the association between decreased victimisation with increased age as a link to power imbalance. The researchers suggested that age provided the power imbalance, suggesting that older children could bully younger children. This goes some way to explaining the decreasing victimisation rate as children get older, that is bullies may instead be engaged in bullying younger children who may find it more difficult to defend themselves because they are younger. This connection was also suggested by Butler *et al.* (2010) in respect to older children engaging in cyberbullying. Support was further found in Ybarra and Mitchell (2004), who reported older students (those aged 15 years and older)

were more involved as internet aggressors than younger children (aged 10–14 years old). Furthermore, Tarapdar and Kellett (2011) reported older youths (14–15 years old) as being more likely to be victims of cyberbullying (at a rate of 40%) than younger youths (at a rate of 35%); however, no reasons were given as to why, and the researchers did not state whether this findings were statistically significant.

In contrast with these studies and the notion that older children (although none of these studies considered participants aged 16 and over) are more commonly engaged in cyberbullying, Smith *et al.* (2008) found that older students were less likely to be engaged in cyberbullying—both as victims and as perpetrators. The researchers surveyed 360 adolescents; 210 were 12–15 years old in secondary school whilst the remaining 150 were 15–20 years old in sixth form education in Sweden. Although no statistically significant age differences were found for either perpetration or victimisation, the difference in prevalence rates between secondary school pupils (17.6% cybervictims, 11.9% cyberbullies) and sixth form students (8% cybervictims, 3.3% cyberbullies) shows that younger children were victimised more than older children. The researchers did not look into whether those in the sixth form targeted those in secondary school; collection of such data would have added weight to Guerra *et al* (2011) claim that age provided power imbalance. However, sixth form students in Smith *et al.* (2008) were found to engage less in cyberbullying than secondary school pupils. This suggests that Guerra's assumption that older children bully younger children may not be accurate. In any case, the possibility of being anonymous in cyberbullying situations means that cyberbullies can hide their age, and therefore it is plausible that older children can be cyberbullied by younger children.

Although the above studies considered age as a possible factor in determining engagement with cyberbullying, some do not explore *why* age is a factor: for example, they did not make connections such as behavioural or biological changes, as outlined by Byron (2009). Thus far, the relationship has only been investigated largely at a surface level. The literature has also missed key opportunities to explore those aged 16 and older. For example, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted, 2012) stated that its report focussed on 5–18 year olds; however, only primary and secondary schools were visited as part of their research, and no information was gathered pertaining to the 16–18 year age category. In Hinduja and Patchin (2008), respondents aged 17 and over were excluded from the analysis, even though thee accounted for nearly a half of the sample (43%, n = 2,978) with no reasons given. The researchers even made reference to age being an indicator of cyberbullying and used age as a factor in their analysis for those aged below 17 years.

Furthermore, Tarapdar and Kellet (2011), in their research that focused on age comparisons in cyberbullying, recognised that there was sparse literature on age comparisons in cyberbullying research. They pointed out the following:

> *By disaggregating age, additional knowledge is hoped to be generated to ascertain the extent to which this may influence young people's experiences, responses and attitudes and prevention* (p.15).

The aim of their research was to:

> *achieve a breadth and depth of analysis [by] incorporating perspectives of numerous and diverse young people, representative of a cross-section of youth in England, is an important feature of this work* (p.15).

Despite these reassuring assertions, however, the age range considered in the research was only 12–16 year olds enrolled in secondary schools. In research based on age comparisons, they missed the opportunity to include the post-16 age group, failing to mention it in their own methodology.

It is clear that research on cyberbullying needs to be conducted in post-16 education so that more data can be collected to understand how cyberbullying works in this age group and to measure the extent of the issue among this age group. The question arises: what becomes of teenagers in education in terms of research into cyberbullying when they go to college? They should remain on the research radar.

2.6.2 Gender

Research by Li (2006) and Snell and Englander (2010), found that boys were more involved as bullies than girls in *direct* forms of bullying, such as physical violence and verbal threats. Olweus (1999) suggested this was because boys feel the need to assert their dominance over others. O'Brien (2011) provided an example of this dominant behaviour: a heterosexual boy calls another boy 'gay' or 'gay boy' in order to subordinate them, regardless of the person's actual sexual orientation. Li (2006) also found that boys were more likely to be targets of bullying than girls. This may be because boys were bullying boys, and so were both the bullies and victims, but Li did not consider this relationship and this claim therefore is speculation.

Archer (2004) found, in a meta-analysis he conducted on gender differences in aggression, that boys were more engaged in direct, physical aggression and girls

in more indirect aggression. Archer found that the gender difference was greater for physical aggression and connected this to sexual selection theory (SST) and social role theory (SRT) to explain why aggression levels were higher in males than females. Archer did not specifically mention 'bullying' as a subset of aggression, or focus on bullying as an issue but his work does reinforce the notion that boys are more involved in direct aggression more than girls.

In contrast, girls were found to engage more in *indirect* forms of bullying, including social and relational bullying (Olweus, 1999; Slonje and Smith, 2008; Underwood and Rosen, 2010). Such behaviour included gossiping, manipulating friendships and using relationships as a weapon. Kowalski *et al.* (2008) suggested that girls engaged in indirect aggression because they were bored, wanted to belong to the in-group, were jealous of others, or may otherwise seek to gain a level of protection or to enact revenge on someone who had bullied or had been aggressive towards them. Although these findings and perceptions exist about the role of boys and girls in bullying, studies such as Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) found no gender differences for either bullies or victims.

Researchers have tended to consider gender as part of their research, perhaps because it is a relatively easy and accessible demographic characteristic in which to collect surface-level data. In cyberbullying research, several studies have shown that boys were more involved than girls in cyberbullying both as victims and as bullies. For example, Li (2006) found 22.3% of boys and 11.6% of girls were cyberbullies. This shows that boys were nearly twice as likely to be cyberbullies than girls. Li (ibid) also found boys to be involved more in offline bullying, considered above. Ang and Goh (2010) found 23.6% of boys and 15.1%

of girls were cyberbullies. Boys were found to be at higher risk for displaying cyberbullying behaviours in research by Fanti *et al.* (2012). Moreover, Ackers (2012) reported that 77% of those admitting to cyberbullying another were boys, but this relationship was not statistically significant. However, Ackers (ibid) did find a statistically significant relationship for boys being more likely to be *cybervictims* than girls.

In contrast, Kowalski *et al.* (2008) found more girls to be cybervictims—35% compared to 11% of boys. Furthermore, 13% of girls and 9% of boys admitted to cyberbullying someone else. These findings show that girls were more involved as cyberbullies and as cybervictims. However, the researchers asked participants only to consider the last two months, and so the relationship could have been different if a longer time period was considered. Cross *et al.* (2009) found 32% of girls were cybervictims compared with 23% of boys, and in terms of being *persistently* cyberbullied (lasting more than a year), girls were twice as likely as boys to be victimised.

Slonje and Smith (2008) believed that girls engaged more in cyberbullying than boys because they used technology to communicate more than boys. However, technology is highly prevalent among teenagers generally, and the relationship between access and technology use may not be a gendered one based on how much or how long it is used for; although this claim is worth investigating. Kowalski and Limber (2007) suggested that the relatively indirect method of cyberbullying, compared with physical bullying, is the reason girls cyberbully more than boys. This same stigma also can be seen to have followed girls online. Mobile phones and the internet are ideal mediums for more indirect methods of

bullying, and may be used in place of physical forms of bullying (Pornari and Wood, 2010; Underwood and Rosen, 2010).

Snell and Englander (2010) found girls to be more involved than boys in cyberbullying both as cyberbullies and as cybervictims. Englander (2009) found high school cyberbullies to be much more likely to be girls; 'college' (USA research) cyberbullies, on the other hand, were more likely to be boys. However, the number of participants in this research was low and therefore should be used only as preliminary and indicative.

Ackers (2012) reported a statistically significant gender relationship, where girls were more likely to be victims of cyberbullying compared with boys. Phippin (2012) gathered data on *sexting* and found that girls would generally self-generate an image at the request from a boy. This made girls more at risk of the image being distributed to those outside of their control and ultimately being used against them. Noret and Rivers (2006) found girls more than boys experienced cyberbullying as a victim; 20.8% compared to 10.3%, respectively.

There were also studies that found no gender relationships in cyberbullying—or at least no statistically significant ones. Campbell *et al.* (2008) found no gender differences in those who were either cyberbullies or cybervictims. This was also the case in the works of Ybarra and Mitchell (2004), Hinduja and Patchin (2008), Mishna *et al.* (2010) and Slonje *et al.* (2012). Slonje and Smith (2008) found that 36.2% of cybervictims reported that they did not know the identity of their cyberbully. Therefore, the potential for cyberbullies (or indeed cybervictims) to be anonymous online creates problems in determining gender relationships.

Overall, gender findings in cyberbullying research are genuinely mixed; both boys and girls have been identified at greater risk of being cyberbullies or cybervictims. However, there is some *perception* that girls are engaged in cyberbullying more so as cyberbullies and cybervictims. Shariff (2008) suggested that boys and girls display similar levels of bullying behaviour; with boys being engaged more in overt, physical types of bullying, and girls being engaged in covert, psychological bullying. Underwood and Rosen (2010) recognised that both boys and girls are involved in cyberbullying as bullies and victims. However, the *type* of cyberbullying activity in which girls and boys engaged may be different: for example, boys may be more involved in happy slapping (because of the physical component of this behaviour) and spreading online rumours for girls (because of the social/relational components). Nevertheless, these particular relationships have not been established by academic research and are merely speculative. The involvement of boys and girls is not mutually exclusive, however. It may be the case that both boys and girls are involved in cyberbullying the same victims, who may be both boys and girls. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that, whichever gender is involved in cyberbullying others, there are victims who are affected by the actions and behaviours of others, regardless of their gender.

In concluding their position on gender, Bauman *et al.* (2013, p.6) remarked:

> *research on gender differences in cyberbullying is fraught with inconsistent findings*.

It is clear that further research is needed in order to examine the role of gender in cyberbullying. Although a number of studies have considered gender, research *solely* dedicated to gender differences is sparse. Many of the studies considered gender as only part of the research, rather than it being the main thrust of

investigation. The consequence was that only surface-level understanding was obtained, rather than an in-depth analysis of the relationships of gender in cyberbullying, and application and development of theoretical positions specific to gender. In any case, it remains that gender patterns amongst 16-19 year olds in further education contexts have not been investigated; therefore, there is the opportunity to explore this aspect in this thesis.

2.6.3 Ethnicity

Bauman (2010) recognised that research on ethnicity in relation to cyberbullying is 'essentially unexamined' (p.807) in the literature. Ethnicity is usually reported in cyberbullying research as part of a summary of the demographics of participants, but is rarely followed up with any further consideration or analysis in terms of the relationship between ethnicity and cyberbullying. Burton and Mutongwizo (2009) accepted that, because studies have taken place in predominantly White populations, such as in the UK, USA and Canada, as well as some European countries, little data exists on the variations and relationships between ethnicity and cyberbullying. Where ethnicity has been considered in previous research, the following findings have been reported.

Cross *et al.* (2009) found that most of the non-White and non-British groups (including Asian, Mixed, Chinese and White Other) were more at risk of being cyberbullied compared to White British groups, with the exception of Black participants, who were targeted at a slightly less rate compared to the sample proportions. The researchers found that being a victim of persistent cyberbullying was a risk factor with White non-British and non-White ethnic backgrounds. The researchers suggested that it was possible that immigrants could be targeted

because of their foreigner status. However, the researchers did not collect details concerning what the cyberbullying related to; that is to say, it was not known whether the different ethnic groups were actually targeted because of their ethnicity. Furthermore, the researchers did not gather any data in relation to cyber perpetration by ethnicity, or the relationship between the ethnicity/race of those cyberbullying others and those being cyberbullied.

Li (2005) found that 61.4% of cybervictims were White and 38.4% were non-White, and 69.6% of cyberbullies were White and 30.4% were non-White. The percentage of White participants was 68.9%, suggesting that White participants were proportionately less likely to be cyberbullied than their non-White counterparts. Farrow and Fox (2011) also established no statistically significant differences in their experience with cyberbullying in terms of ethnicity.

Hinduja and Patchin (2008) suggested that marginalised groups in society, that may be typically and historically seen as less powerful in offline bullying contexts, may not be as disadvantaged through technological methods of bullying. This is because they are less exposed and their ethnicity might not be known owing to the fact they are anonymous. In a comparable vein, marginalised groups, such as non-White groups in Western contexts, might address their power imbalance by bullying someone online in order to get retribution for prior offline victimisation. However, this is speculation and is worthy of investigation.

2.6.4 Sexual Orientation

Research by Guasp (2012) in the UK found that 53% of l,614 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youths aged 11–19 years were victims of verbal

abuse, 23% were victims of cyberbullying and 16% were victims of physical abuse. A total of 55% of the sample reported being bullied due to their sexuality; which is homophobic bullying. The researcher did not collect data on participants' involvement in bullying others or cyberbullying others, which represented both a missed opportunity and possible bias, due to the researcher conducting the research on behalf of Stonewall, which is a LGBT charity.

Rivers and Cowie (2006) suggested that LGB youth made up between 3% and 5% of the school population in the UK, of which around two-thirds experienced bullying. The researchers found that homophobic experiences at school were long-term and systematic, and perpetrated by groups as opposed to individuals. The researchers reported that 82% of LBG youths had been called names and were ridiculed in front of others, whilst 60% had been hit or punched at school. Furthermore, 53% of the sample had contemplated self-harm or suicide as a direct result of being bullied at school because of their sexuality, 40% had actually attempted to self-harm or commit suicide, and 30% tried more than once to self-harm or take their own lives.

Blumenfeld and Cooper (2010) provided details of teenager Jamie Nabozny, from the USA, who was bullied by his fellow students at school because he was gay. The researchers provided a summary James's experience of bullying:

> *Students urinated on him, pretended to rape him during class, and when they found him alone, kicked him so many times in the stomach that he required surgery…[S]chool administrators…at one point said that Jamie should expect such treatment by his peers because he is gay. Jamie attempted suicide several times, dropped out of school, and ran away from home.* (p.116)

This example illustrates the need to explore the relationship and context of

cyberbullying and sexual orientation in an effort to measure the extent to which discriminatory forms of bullying occur in colleges, and further, to take robust action in order to effectively prevent and respond to such homophobic behaviour and incidents.

It does not necessarily follow that if a person is gay that is the reason they are being bullied/cyberbullied; without formal enquiry it is yet not possible to conclude that those who are gay are being or cyberbullied are being targeted about their sexual orientation. Although there is some indication in the literature concerning the incidence of cyberbullying in relation to sexual orientation, there is, by no means, enough exploration or explanation of this relationship. Further investigation needs to be undertaken in order to determine whether or not there are statistical relationships between cyberbullying and sexual orientation.

2.6.5 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The internet can afford those with SEND an easier means of relating to their peers, and communication technologies can 'act as a leveller' (Cross *et al*., 2009, p.8) for those with disabilities. Kowalski and Fedina (2011) suggested that some with SEND might lack social skills and empathy, and be emotionally volatile. The possible increased inability to understand and develop relationships with others can lead to problems online as well as offline (Blandford, 2015a). However, the researchers also stressed that SEND covers a broad spectrum and over generalisations should be avoided. For example, someone with autism may suffer from social skills but someone with a sensory impairment, such as being deaf or blind, or someone who has a physical disability, such as being in a wheelchair,

might not suffer from difficulties in social skills in the same way (Cross *et al*., 2009).

Roekel *et al.* (2010) acknowledged that research into bullying has predominantly focused on adolescents in mainstream education contexts, with little attention on education institutions catering for the needs of young people with SEND. The researchers conducted their research in a school catering for pupils with a range of SEND. The researchers focussed on pupils who were on the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The researchers highlighted that relative deficits of those on the ASD, such as in developing normal social interactions and relationships as well as in understanding the behaviours of others, as reasons for being at higher risk of being bullied. The researchers also highlighted reasons why those on the ASD were at a higher risk of bullying others, which included increased levels of aggressive behaviours and a limited insight in social processing, meaning that they may be bullying others without being aware of it. The researchers recognised that those on the ASD, and those with SEND generally, were not equally disabled in recognising bullying behaviours, and so this claim did not generally apply. The researchers placed importance on whether those on the ASD could actually perceive whether they were bullies or victims. The researchers found that their teachers perceived higher levels of bullying victimisation and perpetration than their pupils. In terms of victimisation, teachers perceived bullying at a rate of 30% and pupils 17%, and in terms of bullying others, teachers perceived at a rate of 46% and pupils 19%. These findings show that pupils with ASD perceived being a victim of bullying and bullying others less than their teachers. However, there may be conceptual differences of what was meant by bullying than different between the teachers and the pupils, which the researcher did not report on.

Chamberlain *et al.* (2010) highlighted in their research that 38% of school children with disabilities were worried about being bullied, and were more likely to feel that 'less bullying' (p.36) would improve their life than those without disabilities (25% and 18%, respectively). Bauman and Pero (2010) sampled 30 students aged 13–18 years who were either deaf or hard of hearing, and a further 22 students who were hearing students in the same age group. The researchers sought to establish whether or not deaf or hard of hearing students used technology to bully hearing students, especially if they had been the victims of bullying in the past. The findings showed that no deaf students had bullied hearing students. In fact, the researchers reported no statistically significant differences by hearing status for being a bully or cyberbully, or for being a victim of bullying or cyberbullying, but consideration should be given to the small sample size.

Those with SEND were found to be at higher risk of being victims of cyberbullying in Cross *et al.* (2009). The researchers found that of the 4% of the sample who reported having SEND, 16% were found to suffer from persistent cyberbullying, compared to a lower rate of 9% of the sample who reported not having SEND. These findings show that those with SEND were more likely to be cyberbullied. The researchers did not consider the relationship between those with SEND as cyberbullying others.

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA, 2011) surveyed 80 parents and carers who had a child with a physical disability (35% of the sample), special education needs (62% of the sample) or both (3% of the sample). A total of 96% of parents reported that their child had been bullied at school, with only 3% reporting that their child had not been bullied, whilst 1% did not know. In 85% of the cases,

parents and carers believed that the bullying was to do with their child's SEND, with a further 11% unsure, and 4% believed it was not connected. This research highlighted a high prevalence of rate of those with SEND being victims of bullying, however, the data was collected from parents, and so could be biased. In any case, the voices of the victims were not heard, which is significant as their perception could have been different.

What can be garnered from the research above is that those with SEND have been found to be at higher risk of being bullied, and also perceived to be from the perspective of teachers. However, there is a dearth of research relating to whether those with SEND are engaging in cyberbullying as bullies, with not much more research on victimisation. Whilst it is plausible that those with SEND are at a heightened risk of being cyberbullied; nevertheless, the bullying might not be associated with their SEND characteristic(s) and so this relationship needs to be considered further.

Overall, research relating to the involvement of aged 16-19 years olds in cyberbullying as victims or bullies is limited. There has been more research concentrated on age and gender, compared to the other characteristics considered, but there is yet the case that large-scale research as been conducted in post-16 contexts to provide an additional perspective on these relationships. Furthermore, in relation to ethnicity, sexual orientation and SEND, it is not obvious that research has yet considered the 16-19 year old age group in terms of establishing the relationship between the these demographics, this age group, and being a cybervictim or cyberbully.

2.7 Reasons and Motivations for Engaging in and for Experiencing Bullying and Cyberbullying

Although bullying is not a new phenomenon, little research has been carried out in an effort to investigate the reasons and motivations for being a bully/cyberbully and being a victim/cybervictim. Such research is important in terms of increasing the overall understanding of cyberbullying as a phenomenon through the behaviour of cyberbullies and the experiences of cybervictims. In turn, this understanding can help to inform prevention and intervention strategies aimed at reducing cyberbullying. It is important to establish the motivations of those that bully others both online and offline because these are key for understanding the behaviour of young people in these contexts. Likewise, it is also important to gather from victims of online and offline bullying the reasons why they have been bullied. Disentangling the basis for bullying and being bullied can contribute to the overall understanding of cyberbullying as a phenomenon.

Cyberbullying behaviours vary considerably. According to Aftab (2006) (and cited in Sabella, 2009), four types of cyberbully (five including a subcategory) can be identified based on the motives for their behaviour. Aftab (ibid) explained that even though the *method* used to cyberbully might be the same, for example email or text message, the *reason* for carrying out the cyberbullying might be completely different. These types of cyberbully are:

- The *vengeful angel*, who steps in to protect a person who is targeted, and who would not usually identify themselves as a (cyber)bully. They see themselves as righting wrongs; getting revenge on those who have cyberbullied their friends or others.

- The *power-hungry*, who intentionally want to intimidate, control and show authority over their victims and make them fearful. Physical strength is not important to achieve their aim; instead the power comes from the use of technology. Most often they are offline bullies that also use technology as a way of attacking their victim.
- The *revenge of the nerds* (as a sub-category of the power-hungry), who use technology to level the imbalance they face offline in relation to physical strength. They are usually victims of offline bullying (Aftab suggests geeks and girls, who may lack physical strength). They empower themselves through the anonymity of technology in order to get revenge on those who have bullied them offline, without the risk of being physically hurt.
- The *mean girls*, who operate in a group and usually bully others for entertainment purposes or because they are bored. While typically girls, this is not always the case, but these cyberbullies often work in groups with the aim of attacking the their victim's reputation and social relationships. They may be jealous or envious of their victim and want them to be hated, ignored and excluded by others. This type of cyberbullying tends to be a campaign, rather than a one-off incident.
- The *inadvertent (*or accidental), who does not think about the consequences of what they are doing and does not intend to hurt anyone. The careless attitude to their actions can result in others being hurt, because they hastily send something in anger or frustration. They are the one exception to the criteria 'cyberbullying requires intent', but the victim

does not understand the behaviour as unintentional, and therefore it is still cyberbullying.

These categories of cyberbully describe different motivations for engaging in cyberbullying behaviours, and have varying levels of intent to cause harm. For example, there is a stark contrast between power-hungry bullies and the inadvertent in terms of the level of intent to do harm.

2.7.1 Theoretical Models to Explain Bullying

A surprisingly small number of studies have employed a theoretical framework in an effort try to explain why people bully and are bullied. Where such approaches have been used, they have almost exclusively been linked with the field of social psychology. For example, Rigby (2004) employed *individual difference theory*, which purports that bullying is the outcome of power differences in interactions. According to this theory, a bully may target a victim because of some deficit or characteristic that the bully does not have—or not to the same extent, such as a disability. Hinduja and Patchin (2010) used *general strain theory* in their research and found that those who cyberbullied others experienced offline victimisation, and cyberbullied others as a way of releasing frustration. However, this link has not been as a result of substantial research, but this example can be seen to relate to Aftab's (2006) *revenge of the nerds* category of cyberbully, outlined above.

Pornari and Wood (2010) studied the cognitive mechanisms by which people used to explain and rationalise their actions and behaviour. They referred to Bandura's (1986) *social cognitive theory*, by which moral disengagement (MD) was explained as a cognitive process used by people to justify their aggressive or

harmful behaviour. Bandura (1986) explained that people have feelings such as guilt, which create boundaries that can affect how people act and behave. However, with moral disengagement, this guilt is not activated, which leads to increased risk of people engaging in harmful or deviant behaviour. Furthermore, they rationalise and justify their behaviour towards others by blaming instead of taking personal responsibility, and by doing so, do not experience feelings such as guilt or shame.

In their research, Pornari and Wood (2010) found that MD was positively correlated with aggression, showing that the more aggressive someone was, the more disengaged they were from normal cognitive processing and moral feelings, which in turn supported further aggressive behaviour. The researchers also found that MD levels were higher in those who bullied others offline compared to online. The researchers suggested that students might not consider cyberbullying to be *real aggression* because of the physical distance from the victim and the possibility of anonymity makes it difficult to establish the impact on the victim, therefore there is less chance of empathising with the victim.

Perren *et al.* (2012) used Bandura's (2002) *moral disengagement theory* in their research, and found that bullies were more morally disengaged, or expressed morally disengaged reasoning, than those who were not bullies. Moral disengagement can also involve attributing blame to other people or to the external environment. Perren *et al.* (ibid) found that bullies who were morally engaged felt feelings such as sadness, anxiety and shame. However, those who were morally disengaged felt happy or proud of their behaviour, and generally displayed a lack of empathy for their victim.

These more explanatory frameworks outlined above have not been widely used in the bullying literature, despite research into bullying being conducted for over 40 years. There remains a lack of clarification overall to explain why people engage in bullying, especially in terms of cyberbullying as a bully or a victim. *Attribution theory* may help fill a gap in the literature and be used as a frame of reference for analysis and discussion.

2.7.2 Attribution Theory

Attribution theory is a theoretical and explanatory framework in the field of social psychology, founded by Fritz Heider (1958) and subsequently developed by Harrold Kelley (1967), Edward Jones *et al.* (1972) and Bernard Weiner (1974). Attribution theory explains *causality;* the process of how individuals perceive, understand and interpret their actions and behaviour, as well as their thoughts, feelings and intentions about the world around them (Jones *et al*., 1972). The process of making an attribution involves assigning the *cause* of someone's own behaviour or that of other people (Hogg and Vaughn, 2011).

Heider (1958) believed people attribute their actions and behaviour to internal and external causes. *Internal attributions* are concerned with an individual; their disposition, intention, personality, character and attitude. For example, if a student who is falling behind on their college work because the student realises they have not put in enough effort, then the student is making an internal attribution. *External attributions* relate to an individual's environment; their school, home life, situations, social pressure, and upbringing. For example, if a student blames falling behind on their college work to their friends wanting to socialise all the time, then the student is making an external attribution.

When a person makes an inappropriate attribution, that is, choosing the wrong cause for their behaviour or an outcome, such as by blaming their poor exam performance on the quality of teaching (external) rather than on his or her own skills and effort (internal), this is referred to as a *fundamental attribution error* (Weiner, 1985). Making appropriate attributions helps people to understand their own behaviour and the behaviour of others. However, if an attribution is made inaccurately, there can be misplaced blame, which can mask more appropriate causes to a person's behaviour (Jones and Harris, 1967).

Research related to the application of attribution theory is sparse in cyberbullying, research in spite of its noticeable applicability.

2.7.3 Reasons Given for Bullying and Cyberbullying Behaviours

Bullying behaviour is claimed to involve repetition, intention to harm, and an imbalance of power, as discussed. Gaining or demonstrating power and control might be an underlying motive for a person's behaviour; however, by itself, this does not explain *why* power and control is needed. Boyd (2014) suggests that bullies can be aggressive because they might be struggling with identity problems or problems with their mental health. Struggles such as these might lead people to become aggressive and bully those around them.

Van der Valk (2013) suggested that transient years, such as between school and college, for example, represent a period of social uncertainty, which can result in teenagers re-establishing their social hierarchy. In unfamiliar environments, when people do not readily know where they fit, a hierarchy based on dominance can

become present. This link to why people bully is significant to this research since college represents a new environment for young people.

Wingate *et al.* (2013) suggested bullying behaviours are either *proactive*, which involve bullying someone without prior cause, or *reactive*, where the bully is provoked in some way either by the target or someone else. An example of reactive bullying is when someone is cyberbullied and then retaliates by targeting the person who as cyberbullied them, or perhaps by targeting another person out of frustration. In this way, a cybervictim might also be a cyberbully.

The nature of the behaviour is important to consider, since it can be based on intolerance or prejudice, for example, by focusing on a person's race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability (Li, 2010; Fried and Sosland, 2011; Blandford, 2015d). This demonstrates the connection between why people might target someone along with the different groups that might be targeted. In the case of discriminatory forms of bullying, such as homophobia for example, the cybervictim might be, or perceived to be gay; a possible difference from the cyberbully, and being gay is the reason why they are being bullied. In this way, the cyberbully is seen to make an external attribution for their behaviour because their reason was a (perceived) characteristic of their victim.

Thornberg *et al.* (2012) surveyed 250 upper secondary school students in Sweden (aged 15-21 years, 92% were aged 16-18 years) about explanations for bullying. It is important to note that the researchers did not make it clear whether the participants had experienced bullying or cyberbullying as a bully or a victim; it appeared as though the data was collected from participants regardless of their experience of bullying. The researchers categorised the reasons provided by

participants into three main types of attributions based on qualitative responses, which were coded as: *bully attributing*, *victim attributing* and *social context attributing*.

The researchers found that within the bully attributing category, 57% of participants referred to *psychological problems* of the bully as reasons for their behaviour (including poor self-confidence, low self-esteem, a difficult childhood, bad parenting, and being a victim of bullying), 41% made reference to *social positioning* (such as gaining power, popularity, status, and to avoid being a victim themselves), 21% made reference to *emotions* (such as jealousy of the victim, or for their own amusement/for fun), and 7% selected *thoughtlessness* (not thinking about what they were doing or the effect it had on the victim).

In relation to the *victim attributing* category, all participants made comments that referred to a *deviance* of the victim (that is, a way in which the victim was different) as the explanation for being bullied (including the way the victim dressed, spoke or acted, and because they were from a different background). Finally, under the social context, participants made reference to *group pressure* (13%), *peer conflicts (*4%) and an *inviting school environment* (5%), where bullying was not taken seriously, or where there is a poor anti-bullying policy, or poor student supervision, as explanation for bullying behaviour.

Overall, 81% of cyberbullies made *bully attributions*, 45% made *victim attributions*, and 21% made *social context attributions*. Some participants provided multiple attributions. The researchers explained that most of the attributions were individualistic; that is to say, they were attributed to the bully or to the victim, as opposed to the social context, which was non-individualistic. At

first it would appear that from a bully's perspective, the *bully attributions* category would be internal attributions and the *victim attributions* and *social context attributions* would be external attributions and therefore link well to attribution theory. However, the researchers did not refer to this level of categorisation, and if they intended this to be the case, it would have been incorrect since under the bully attributing category they would have conflated poor self-confidence (internal) and bad parenting (external), for example, as meaning internal attributions. Therefore, even those some categorisation was correct, attribution theory was not applied fully to this research. This study was useful as most of the participants were aged 16-18 years old and therefore offered an insight into the explanations that this age group provided as reasons for bullying. However, the participants were not selected on the basis of their experience with bullying and therefore the voices of bullies and victims was not gathered, and even though there could be some transferability of findings, this needs to be the result of investigation rather than speculation. Furthermore, the context was in upper secondary schools in Sweden, and concentrated on bullying rather than cyberbullying, and therefore the context, location and focus of the research is different to the scope in this thesis.

Cross *et al.* (2012) compared the reasons provided by cyberbullies for their behaviour in their 2012 research with those in their 2009 research, which are presented in the table on the next page:

Table 5:Reasons given for cyberbullying others

Reason for Cyberbullying Others	Type of attribution	Percentage (%) of respondents in 2009	Percentage (%) of respondents in 2012
I did it for a joke	I	27.0	40.0
Revenge or to get someone back	I	35.0	39.0
Angry about stuff	I	25.0	16.0
I was bored	I	11.0	15.0
It's easy	E	6.0	14.0
To protect myself	I	14.0	11.0
I'm being bullied myself	E	6.0	11.0
All my mates do it	E	7.0	9.0
It made me feel better	I	0.0	9.0
No-one will know it's me	E	3.0	7.0
Earns me respect	I	3.0	6.0
Everyone can see it online	E	2.0	6.0
Felt left out	E	6.0	5.0
Gets me noticed	E	2.0	5.0

Adapted from Cross et al (2012)

The table shows that the most prevalent reasons for cyberbullying others, in both studies, was for a *joke* and to get *revenge*. Using these two reasons, it is clear that the intention to harm the victim might have been different, despite them being the two main reasons for the behaviour. Along with the other reasons provided by participants in the table, this shows that the reasons (and motives) for the behaviour are varied. These reasons have been categorised into internal (I) and external (E) attributions, as indicated. This labelling was undertaken by me and not Cross *et al.* (2012), in an attempt to link the reasons provided to attribution theory. What can be seen from the classification in the table is that most of the internal attributions appear to be most prevalent, compared to external attributions, most which appear towards the bottom of the table. This can suggest that cyberbullies recognised that the reasons for their behaviour were attributable to themselves, which could suggest they are morally engaged. However, this is just speculation and needs to be investigated further. In any case, the findings in

Cross *et al.* (2012) are indicative of this relationship, as the researchers did not link their research to attribution theory.

2.7.4 Reasons Given for Being Bullied or Cyberbullied

The literature on reasons why victims feel they are bullied is sparse. Most of the research available has concentrated on reasons for engaging in bullying and cyberbullying, from the perspective of the bully, or generally. The voices of victims are virtually unheard.

In some cases of bullying, the reason why the victim is bullied is clear: for example, if the victim is gay and the victim cites this the reason for being targeted because the bully told them this (Blumenfeld and Cooper, 2010). However, it is possible that victims of bullying or cyberbullying do not know why they are targeted, which can further augment their anxiety.

Bauman and Pero (2010) investigated the reasons that victims of bullying gave for being bullied. The researchers found that victims who blamed *themselves* for being bullied suffered greater levels of distress compared to those who blamed the bully. Moreover, those who internalised the reason for being bullied expected it to continue more than those who externalised the reasons for their experiences. This pattern suggests that victims who made an internal attribution were more negatively affected than victims that made an external attribution.

Bauman (2010) investigated victims' experiences with cyberbullying; however, the questions asked included whether the school had a cyberbullying policy and whether teachers tried to stop cyberbullying, rather than focussing on asking what happened or why they were targeted. This represented a missed opportunity in

collecting data from participants that related directly to their experiences of being cyberbullied. Another missed opportunity can be seen in Cross *et al.* (2009); although the researchers gathered data from cybervictims about what happened, such as a picture being posted online; victims were not asked *why* this happened or *what* it was about. The voices of victims in terms of why they are cyberbullied are limited.

In Ditch the Label (2014), the researchers *did* ask victims why they were targeted, however, the researchers did not report findings separately for victims of bullying and cyberbullying. The reasons reported by victims are shown in the table below:

Table 6: Reasons given by victims for being bullied

Reason given for being bullied	% of victims
Appearance	40.0
Height/body shape	36.0
Interests	32.0
High grades	22.0
Friend/family member is being bullied	20.0
Level of masculinity/femininity	14.0
Household income	13.0
Lower grades	9.0
Disability	7.0
Racist bullying	7.0
Homophobia	7.0
Religion	6.0
Culture	5.0
Transphobic comments	2.0

Adapted from Ditch the Label (2014)

The table above shows that the most prevalent reasons that victims gave for being bullied were their *appearance* and their *height/body shape*. What is revealed by the other reasons given is that there was a range of different reasons given for being bullied, relating to educational performance, disability, racism and homophobia. What is also clear from these findings is that the percentages

reported total more than 100%, revealing that some victims reported being bullied for multiple reasons. This research was important as it collected data from victims in relation to why they were bullied, thereby providing them with a voice. However, the researchers did not separate their findings by age group, educational context, or type of bullying so it was not possible to comment on the findings in these terms.

As can be seen, rarely has bullying or cyberbullying research literature considered participants' views of what happened or the reasons behind them being targeted. Research needs to dig deeper. Importantly, this thesis aims to do this as it is recognised as important to the phenomenological approach that the lived experiences and voices of participants are collected.

2.8 Consequences of Cyberbullying Others and Being Cyberbullied

It can never be acceptable to believe that bullying or cyberbullying is part of growing up, or that it is typical of social relationships to humiliate another person. Being involved in bullying as a victim or bully, or both, can interfere with and limit a person's physical and psychological wellbeing, as well as their academic attainment and social integration (Mackay *et al*., 2011; Bauman *et al*., 2013). Therefore, quality of life and human potential can be negatively affected. Depending on the nature, severity and frequency of a victim's experience, the effect can be minimal or catastrophic, and can have both short-term and long-term impacts, affecting young victims into their adult years and the rest of their lives. Machmutow *et al.* (2013) suggested that various coping strategies, such as having close support from family and friends, showing assertiveness, and being resilient can buffer some of the negative consequences of being victimised.

The consequences of being bullied can be very harmful—not only in terms of psychological harm and suffering, but ultimately through lost lives (Butler *et al*., 2010; Cross *et al*., 2012). However, Boyd (2014) stated that generalising from the most extreme cases of cyberbullying could distort pictures of the consequences of being bullied. This section considers the psychological/emotional, academic, social, and physical impacts that bullying and cyberbullying can have on victims and perpetrators.

2.8.1 Impact on Psychological and Emotional Wellbeing

Cross *et al.* (2012) reported the different impacts of being cyberbullied, drawn from their school-aged participants. These are presented in the table below:

Table 7: The impact of isolated and persistent cyberbullying on cybervictims

Impact	Isolated Cyberbullying (%)	Persistent Cyberbullying (%)
Didn't want to go to school	20.0	40.0
Low self-esteem	19.0	37.0
Low concentration	16.0	31.0
Afraid and didn't feel safe	14.0	29.0
Lost trust	13.0	24.0
Got depressed	11.0	25.0
Didn't want to go out	11.0	23.0
Relationship problems	9.0	21.0
Suicidal thoughts	7.0	18.0
Worried about family	5.0	12.0
Self-harmed	5.0	12.0
Got ill	4.0	7.0
Eating disorder	4.0	11.0
Truancy	3.0	7.0
Attempted suicide	3.0	9.0
Changed school	2.0	5.0
Went to GP	2.0	5.0

Adapted from Cross et al. (2012)

The data in the table shows that participants who were persistently cyberbullied experienced a higher rate of each of the impacts reported. The most common impact reported, for both isolated and persistent cyberbullying experiences, was the feeling of not wanting to go to school, followed by low self-esteem, and low concentration. The table highlights feelings, such as being afraid, feeling unsafe, experiencing depression, and losing trust, but also highlights physical issues, including self-harm, becoming ill, developing eating disorders and attempting suicide. Overall, being a victim of cyberbullying clearly results in a range of negative consequences. Some of these consequences included certain actions, such as changing school and going to the doctor's, others though were more serious and included self-harm and attending suicide. Furthermore, since the percentages for both columns totalled more than 100%, it is evident that cybervictims experienced multiple negative impacts.

Although any form of bullying can lead to negative psychological and emotional impact, scholars, such as those below, have suggested that being cyberbullied can magnify these effects, and can have a greater impact on victims, compared to offline bullying. The reasons cited for this are explained by the possibility of anonymity, distribution to an infinite audience, and the inescapability of technology (Atkinson, 2008; Li, 2010; Norman and Connolly, 2011). For example, Hoff and Mitchell (2009) found that cybervictims reported a higher adverse impact on their feelings, such as powerlessness and fear, when they did not know who was cyberbullying them, compared to those who knew who the cyberbully was. The potential for cyberbullying content to be distributed widely involves not only more people, but can also be difficult to remove when posted online. The permanence of the written word or image can add to the emotional

and psychological impact that the victim experiences (Slonje *et al.,* 2013). Further, as young people use technology as a prime method of communication, it is difficult for them to escape from being cyberbullied or from using technology (Pearce *et al*., 2011).

Although researchers have suggested that cyberbullying can be more damaging to a victim's emotional and psychological well-being than offline bullying, Gorzig and Frumkin (2013) recognised that empirical evidence to support this notion is lacking. Much depends on what is being compared, for example, if a victim being hit repeatedly by peers over the course of a year is compared to a person receiving a couple of text messages about their choice of friends, then offline bullying is more severe. Similarly, two comparable cyberbullying situations may have a different impact on two separate victims, each of whom might have developed varying levels of resilience or coping strategies.

Ševčíková *et al.* (2012) provided the example of a nasty name sent by text compared to the distribution of a sexual image online; they are at least perceived to have different levels of severity. The psychological and emotional consequences of being targeted can be dependent on an individual's experience and perception of what happened. In this way, something that may seem minor to one person may be the worst thing to happen for another person. What some people consider to be cyberbullying others might construe as a joke.

Sticca and Perren (2013) found that the medium of the bullying/cyberbullying was secondary to the level of publicity and the extent of anonymity in the bullying/cyberbullying situation. The authors reported that public and anonymous, compared to private and non-anonymous, scenarios were perceived as worse. In

particular, public cyberbullying was perceived to be the most severe by participants, following by public traditional bullying, and in terms of anonymity, cyberbullying was seen to be most severe. The authors suggested that the reduced level of control over the situation by the victim contributed to this finding. The authors recognised that there was often overlap with a victim being both traditionally bullied and cyberbullied and that the consequences, including lower levels of academic attainment and psychosocial difficulties, were the same for both forms of bullying.

Smith et al (2008) found that participants in their study perceived that cyberbullying through picture and video clip was worse than traditional forms of bullying. In contrast, cyberbullying by text message and phone call were perceived to be less severe compared to traditional forms of bullying, while cyberbullying by chat room, website, instant messaging and email were comparable to traditional forms of bullying in terms of severity. The significance in terms of the above studies is that it is not easily determinable whether traditional bullying or cyberbullying is worse on a prima facie level, since there are factors such as, for example, anonymity, publicity, frequency, severity and content that can influence how a victim feels.

McLoughlin (2009) asked participants who had been victims of cyberbullying how it had made them feel: 40% indicated they felt depressed, hurt or sad; 30% said degraded, embarrassed or unsafe; 20% said angry, annoyed or disgusted; and 10% felt indifferent; 90% of cybervictims' emotions were adversely affected by being cyberbullied. A similar range of feelings were found by Mark and Ratliffe (2011), who reported that 49% of victims felt angry as a result of being cyberbullied, 44% felt sad, 34% felt embarrassment, 20% felt afraid, 5% felt

confusion and 3% felt annoyed. These figures, totalling more than 100%, indicated that some cybervictims felt multiple negative feelings as a result of their experiences.

What is clear from the above is that bullying in whatever form has the potential to cause emotional and psychological harm to victims. The vast majority of cybervictims reported experiencing a range of negative feelings, and only the minority of victims felt indifferent or unaffected. Some victims may have had higher levels of resilience and effective coping strategies, or what had happened to them may not have been that serious, relative to other situations or other personal experiences, and therefore may not have been affected by their experience of cyberbullying. For example, a 15-year-old boy said in an interview conducted by Slonje *et al*. (2013, p.29):

> *I don't give a shit about what they said.*

At face value at least it appears that this boy's experience of being cyberbullied did not have any effect on him, but in reality he could have just said this and may have been affected by what had happened. Details of his experiences were not provided. However, it is not commonly the case that victims are unscathed, as this next example illustrates.

In 2011, Vicki, born Simon, a 17 year old from Essex, started getting bullied when she joined sixth form following the decision to undergo a sex change operation. After being called *tranny* and *queer* at sixth form, as well as receiving messages on social networking sites urging her to commit suicide, her parents contacted the police and the school. However, the police took no further action after failing to trace the senders of the messages, and the sixth form management

chose not to speak to students about the situation as they thought it would 'upset them too much' (Thurrock Gazette, 2011, p.1). Vicky attended a psychiatric ward after suffering from a mental breakdown and was rushed to hospital after attempting suicide by cutting herself with a butcher's knife because of the bullying and feeling failed by her sixth form and the police. The pertinence of this case highlights the need for investigation into cyberbullying at colleges and serves to illustrate the damaging effect that victims within this context have experienced.

Vicki's story is important to include because it highlights her *lived experience* of what she went through and endured as a victim of bullying and cyberbullying. Not least, it brings the issue of being a victim of bullying and cyberbullying for a person who is in the age group and college context considered in this thesis. Furthermore, the essence of the phenomenological approach used in this thesis (discussed in the next chapter) was to gather the lived experience of participants who experienced cyberbullying to provide them with a voice.

As shown above with Vicki, physical harm can be a consequence of bullying and cyberbullying. Both victims and bullies have been shown to externalise their behaviour, such as through drug-taking and alcohol abuse (Cowie and Colliety, 2010). In the most extreme instances of cyberbullying, young people have reported self-harm and attempting suicide as a result of being cyberbullied (Norman and Connolly, 2011). Cross *et al.* (2012) reported that 5% of their sample self-harmed and 3% attempted suicide following instances of being cyberbullied. Ditch the Label (2014) reported that 30% of victims of bullying had suicidal thoughts, and a further 10% tried to kill themselves. The physical consequences of being victimised cannot at all be deemphasised: young people

have deliberately cut and hurt themselves, sometimes in secret, because of what has happened or continues to happen to them.

The physical consequences of being cyberbullied can be devastating and tragic. The effect can be life threatening, as outlined above with Vicki, and in the most extreme cases can be life ending. Media headlines of teenagers who have committed suicide where cyberbullying has been a contributing or pivotal factor illustrates the suffering that young people have experienced (Strom and Strom, 2005). Teenage suicide not only represents lost childhoods and wasted human potential, but is horrific to imagine as part of any society. Unfortunate examples of teenagers who have taken their lives in the age group under investigation in this research are outlined below. These examples not only illustrate the grave consequences of being targets of bullying and cyberbullying, but also the actions and behaviours of others that these young people were subjected to.

- Martin Holder, aged 16, from Gloucestershire, hanged himself in his bedroom after years of experiencing bullying, both online and offline. He was taunted about his size and his singing, and anything that would cause his bullies to react. Martin was studying Forensic Computing at college when he committed suicide, and was found by his younger sister. Martin had uploaded videos on YouTube of him singing, but people had left negative and degrading comments, which resulted in Martin taking them down. At school, Martin's clothes were ripped, his belongings taken, and he was subjected to physical violence (The Times, 2014).
- Anthony Stubbs, aged 16 from Lancashire, hanged himself in woodland by his home after being taunted about his bisexuality. Bullies would call him

gay boy and *faggot*. Anthony's death came a few weeks after he became a father after his 18-year-old girlfriend gave birth to their daughter. Anthony was looking forward to starting his college course (The Mirror, 2012).

- Daniel Perry, aged 17 from Fife, jumped off a bridge to his death after being blackmailed on Skype. Daniel, studying an apprenticeship at college to be a mechanic, thought he was chatting to a girl his own age, and when it turned out it was a gang who hijacked the chat, they demanded money from him or they would share the video conversation with his friends and family. Daniel feared the repercussions and took his own life (BBC, 2013).

These tragic cases indicate the most devastating effects of bullying and cyberbullying. The effects can extend to families and peers of victims, and wider society (Li, 2010). There should be no doubt at all that this age range requires further exploration in order to understand how to prevent more regrettable cases such as those outlined above.

Hinduja and Patchin (2010) reported that those who experienced bullying or cyberbullying as a victim or bully were more likely to attempt suicide compared to those who were not involved in either role: victims were 1.7 times more likely to attempt suicide, bullies were 2.1 times more likely, cybervictims were 1.9 times more likely, and cyberbullies were 1.5 times more likely. These figures not only indicate that increased risk of harm is to both victims and bullies, but that offline bullies are at most risk of attempting suicide. Yet, bullies have been the focus of little research in terms of psychological and physical consequences.

What is apparent from the above research is that the harm caused to those involved in bullying and cyberbullying as bullies and victim is self harm and harm

to others, which is physical and psychological. This thesis considers the voices of both cybervictims and cyberbullies when considering the consequences of cyberbullying.

2.8.2 Impact on Academic Performance

Cross *et al.* (2012) found that 20% of cybervictims in their research indicated a reluctance to attend school, which doubled to 40% for those who were persistently cyberbullied. This might have been for fear that the cyberbullying might continue at school, or because they felt embarrassed or humiliated by what had happened. The researchers also calculated that 36% of all truancy was because of bullying or cyberbullying. Truancy levels reported in Ditch the Label (2014) and Guasp (2012) were 20% and 44%, respectively. Cybervictims who attended school were affected by low level of concentration (16% for isolated cybervictims and 31% for persistent cybervictims) (Cross *et al*., 2012). Lower attendance and concentration levels could be contributory factors in not achieving their full potential in examinations.

The DCSF (2007b) found that those who had been bullied at school performed substantially worse in their GCSE exams compared to those who had not been bullied. Overall, there was a fourteen-percentage-point difference of achieving five good GCSE grades (A*–C) between those who had not been bullied and those who had. Furthermore, those who had been bullied were twice as likely not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) at 16 years old after leaving school compared to those who had not been bullied.

In a more recent study, Ditch the Label (2014) found a direct relationship between bullying experiences and grade performance in GCSE English, Maths and Science. The researchers explained that the higher the level of victimisation, the lower the average grade achieved was in these three subjects. The researchers also found that victims who were being bullied at the time of their exams were the least likely to achieve A* and A* grades and most mostly to achieve C grades and below. The researches only considered the linearity of this relationship, without taking into account other factors that could have impacted their grade performance, such as problems at home or time spent on studying. Furthermore, the predicted grades of prior achievement of the sample was not taken into account, which could have affected measurement of what the sample were capable of achieving. Overall, 56% of victims in their research indicated that they felt their studies had been affected by their experiences.

It is not only the grades achieved that can be affected by experiences of bullying and cyberbullying. Guasp (2012) reported that 32% of LGB youths in their sample changed their plans for future education because of homophobic bullying. In Ditch the Label (2014), 44% of victims believed their future career prospects had been affected by their experiences.

Cyberbullying can have an impact on the academic success of young people, but this is under-researched, especially those aged 16-19 years old, and particularly with cyberbullies. Colleges are places where young people choose to continue their education and this reinforces the need for more research on cyberbullying to be done in this context and age group.

2.8.3 Impact on Social Integration

Gangadharbatla (2008) suggested that young people join social networking sites in order to stay in touch with friends, to make new friends, to develop an online identity, and to generally feel a part of a wider group to which they feel affiliation and belonging. Being accepted in groups is an important part of adolescent development (Wingate *et al*., 2013). Furthermore, Boyd (2014) recognised that:

> *Most teens are not compelled by gadgetry as such—they are compelled by friendship. The gadgets are interesting to them primarily as a means to a social end* (p.18)

Apart from these researchers acknowledging the link between technology and relationships, research into the effects of cyberbullying on social integration has not been the *focus* of academic inquiry. Instead, effects on social integration have been considered as part of a wider focus in bullying/cyberbullying research. For example, Ditch the Label (2014) found as part of the impacts of being bullied generally (findings were not separated for bullying or cyberbullying), victims felt their social life (78%) and home life (52%) suffered. In Cross *et al.* (2012) 23% of persistent cybervictims reported *not wanting to go out* and 21% cited *relationship problems* as an impact of their experiences. Relatively more research was found with offline bullying, but research related to social integration is limited.

Being bullied can lead to social rejection, which can lead to social isolation, either through self-exclusion or peer exclusion, or a combination of both (Ackers, 2012). Either way, the result is a lack of integration with peer groups. Victims of bullying may avoid people or activities—such as going out with friends, or not going to school—because of being bullied. Victims of cyberbullying may avoid technology for fear of further cyberbullying, or because they do not want to associate the use

of technology with being bullied (Byron, 2008). This can lead to missing out on social opportunities, and not keeping up-to-date with how technology is being used to communicate and socialise. This cannot only affect interpersonal relationships in the short-term, but also longer-term relationships and career opportunities (Cross *et al.,* 2009).

Being cyberbullied can also affect how victims use technology. Cross *et al.* (2009) found that 48% of those who were persistently cyberbullied changed their phone number, email address or social networking profile as a result of being victimised, and, on the whole, reduced the amount of time they spent online. These strategies are useful if they prevent further bullying and lead to more cautious behaviour, but may reduce interaction with peers and using technology for other beneficial purposes, such as for learning.

While cyber*victims* can become socially rejected or isolated, *cyberbullies* may find social acceptance because of their social status and friendship circles, which can provide them with power (Wingate *et al*., 2013). It is not known whether the bullying makes people popular or whether being popular is a result of bullying behaviours. However, despite their apparent popularity at school, in later life, bullies can suffer from being unpopular with peers and may have fewer friends. Copeland *et al.* (2013) investigated the effects of childhood bullying in adulthood of 1,420 participants aged 9-16 years (1,273 of this sample were surveyed again seven years later aged 16-23 years old). The researchers found that those both victims and bullies were at greater risk of psychiatric disorders in adulthood compared with those who were not a victim or bully. Those who were both a bully and a victim suffered higher levels of depressive and anxiety disorders, and

increased social risk such as being less likely to understand social cues, be unpopular with peers and have less friends, compared to those who were not involved in bullying at all (Copeland *et al,* 2013).

Meta-analyses by Farrington et al (2012) found a strong relationship between bullying others and offending in later life, to the extent that the risk of offending increased by around 50% for those who had bullied others earlier in their lives. Ttofi et al (2012) also conducted meta-analyses and found a similarly strong relationship between bullying others and being violent towards others in later life: the increased risk of violence was two-thirds more compares to those who had not engaged in bullying others. In terms of victims of bullying, Farrington et al (2012) found a weaker relationship between being a victim and later offending (around a 10% increase in risk), whilst Ttofi et al (2012) found an increased risk of around one third between victimisation and later engaging in violent behaviour. However, the exact nature of the offending and violent behaviour was made known, both of which could have varied in severity and frequency.

Bullies can find it more difficult to integrate effectively into society as successfully as non-bullies; they are more likely to be convicted of criminal offences in adult life, and have problems with aggression and mood disturbances (Bauman *et al*., 2013). They are also more likely to engage in risky behaviours, such as drinking and substance abuse, and have a tendency to lie more often (ibid). Furthermore, their job prospects and successes are reduced, and the opportunities of sustaining a healthy relationship and a healthy lifestyle are compromised (ibid). Such long-term negative impacts can be damaging to a person's welfare and happiness. Ang and Goh (2010) reported that the cognitive

empathy of those who bully others is reduced, leading them to not being able to develop proper and effective relationships with others.

2.9 Chapter summary

The literature has been useful in identifying important issues and themes that have emerged in bullying and cyberbullying research, including the definitions and criteria for bullying and cyberbullying. Even though a universal definition of cyberbullying does not yet exist, there is consensus among scholars of an accepted definition. The discussion of these raised issues as to how intention and repetition are determined and measured, and how they apply to both bullying and cyberbullying situations in all cases. This can also make it difficult to distinguish between what is perceived and what is real.

In terms of *prevalence*, cyberbullying has been shown to happen to young people in education settings, but the research has been largely carried out in schools with school-aged children. Where older teenagers have featured in research, they tended to be small in number, and in any case, they were not the prime focus of the cyberbullying research. Prevalence rates in the research literature were found to differ considerably, and a number of reasons were discussed—such as the definition and conceptual understanding of cyberbullying, the timescale considered, the sample size, age of participants, and how cyberbullying was measured—in an effort to explain these variations. The methodological differences were also problematic in the literature and these made comparisons between studies difficult. Research was not identified that had considered as a focus the prevalence of 16-19 year olds in colleges in cyberbullying and cyberbullying others.

In terms of *demographic groups,* age and gender were considered relatively more in the literature compared to other characteristics such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, and SEND. With age, research pointed towards bullying and cyberbullying peaking around the 14-15 years age group, and a perception that it then decreased with age. Some studies found that older teenagers engaged in cyberbullying as victims and bullies, at a rate lower than younger teenagers, but the sample sizes in these studies were small. In addition, in a number of studies there were clear missed opportunities of including 16-19 year olds in colleges as part of the sampling frame. In any case, the relationship with age cyberbullying *within* the 16-19 age range has not been considered. With gender, findings have found to be mixed for bullying and cyberbullying and gender relationships are not clear for victims or bullies, although the perception is that boys were engaged in direct bullying and girls in indirect bullying. However, the research literature did not consider in much depth how and why each gender was involved in cyberbullying specifically. In any case, research in relation to gender among 16-19 year olds is missing.

Research on the relationship between ethnicity, sexual orientation and SEND has been the focus of fewer studies in relation to cyberbullying, with little more research available on bullying. Ethnicity as a factor in bullying or cyberbullying is not clear overall, apart from an indication that race is a reason for being targeted, but the relationship between ethnicities that are perpetrating bullying and those on the receiving end has not been considered. In any case, research has not been done in post-16 contexts in relation to ethnicity and cyberbullying. With sexual orientation, some research highlighted higher rates of victimisation for those who were LGBT, but rarely had research focussed on the role of sexual orientation in

cyberbullying others. With SEND, some research pointed towards those with SEND being targeted more, or at least were perceived to be, but this data was not always collected directly from those with SEND. In any case, research was missing from those with SEND in the 16-19 age group.

In terms of the *reasons* given for being bullied and bullying others in both offline and online contexts, it was found on the whole that explanatory theory was lacking. Although some researchers did collect data on why victims were targeted and why bullies engaged in their behaviour, a limited number of studies discussed these in detail or connect these to a theoretical framework to explain cyberbullying as *behavioural phenomenon*.

Different types of cyberbully were identified, including the power-hungry and the vengeful angel, which helped to inform discussion surrounding the issue in intention to harm and the varied nature of cyberbullying behaviours. *Attribution theory* was identified as an explanatory framework that can be used to categorise the reasons that people attributed to the cause of their behaviour internal and external attributions. The reasons for cyberbullying others were varied, but with the capacity to be categorised into internal and external attributions, which facilitated further discussion. In terms of being cyberbullied, sometimes it was clear why a person was targeted, but data needs to be collected from the victims themselves, rather than cyberbullies. Such as approach to data collection reinforces the use of phenomenology as the guiding framework for this research, by placing value on the lived experiences of participants.

In terms of *consequences*, it was clear from the research literature that being cyberbullied could lead to a range of negative impacts in relation to psychological

and physical wellbeing, academic performance and social integration. The potential and real harm caused, both in the short term and long term, was evidenced by data in the research and case studies of serious self-harm and suicide, that was in strong ways linked to be victimised both online and offline. It is also clear that the harm caused to cybervictims can vary depending on the frequency, intensity and nature of the cyberbullying, and can be connected to coping strategies and resilience. There was some research on the impact of cyberbullying on academic performance, which indicated a negative affect on grade outcomes, but this relationship was not been investigated in detail. Limited research pointed towards being cyberbullied and cyberbullying others as having a negative affect on social integration, but there was not much research to have considered this in detail.

The literature has revealed gaps in what has been considered in cyberbullying research to date. It is evident that the vast majority of research has involved younger children and teenagers, with relatively little research focused on older teenagers (i.e. 16-19 year olds). Where this age group has been considered, they have usually been low in number and not always separated in the analysis of studies. Consequently, the few prevalence rates that have been reported in the literature may not be accurate or representative of this age group since sample sizes have been small and usually based on a small number of participating schools or colleges. Furthermore, this age group has not been the *focus* of any cyberbullying research and therefore relatively little is known about how cyberbullying operates as a phenomenon in this context.

As highlighted above, there has been a lack of consideration of wider demographic groups in the research. None of the research literature considered has investigated or examined the role of *all* of these demographic characteristics in one study in a systematic way with a view to establish the role between different groups and the relationship between being a cyberbully or a cybervictim among 16-19 year olds in colleges.

Research that did consider the reasons for cyberbullying behaviours did so largely from the perspective of the cyberbully, rather than from victim, but overall the literature did not seen to place much weight on collecting the *lived experiences* and providing a voice to cyberbullies to *explain* their behaviour, and especially to cybervictims, who seen not to have been given the opportunity to talk in detail about their experiences of cyberbullying. Consequently, much research relating to the reasons for cyberbullying and being cyberbullied has been reported at surface level, rather than the focus of in-depth enquiry.

Much of the research literature focussed on the consequences of cyberbullying on victims, with much less consideration given to cyberbullies. However, the voices of cyberbullies and cybervictims is generally lacking, and in any case the consequences have not been considered in relation to 16-19 year olds, with much research again focussed on younger age groups in schools.

Overall, these gaps reveal the lack general consideration of 16-19 year olds in colleges, which has affected the breadth and depth of cyberbullying research. Based on the literature review and the gaps that is has revealed, and by looking at

cyberbullying as a behavioural phenomenon, this thesis sought to answer four research questions:

1. How prevalent is cyberbullying amongst students in post-16 education?
2. Are there particular groups that engage in or experience cyberbullying disproportionately?
3. What reasons do students in college give for cyberbullying others and for being cyberbullied?
4. What are the consequences of cyberbullying on feelings, learning and social integration for cyberbullies and cybervictims?

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with describing the position of how abstract philosophical concepts, which as research paradigms, were positioned and applied in this research. *Phenomenology* is then introduced as the philosophical framework and its relevance and applicability discussed in terms of this research. The different aspects of the research design then follow, including details of the population and sample, ethical considerations. A detailed account of the procedure used for the design and data collection of the questionnaire and interviews is then provided, followed by how the data were stored and treated. Details of how the questionnaire and interviews data for analysed and then provided, followed by details of participants and the representativeness of the sample. The chapter end with an account of how the research measures against validity, reliability and trustworthiness.

3.2 Philosophical Framework

A philosophical framework refers to the ways in which individuals understand and perceive the world around them according to their experiences (Cohen *et al*, 2011). It was important to adopt a framework in this research that was capable of capturing such individual experiences and perceptions from participants as the voices of 16-19 year olds in colleges have not been adequately listened to in cyberbullying research. *Phenomenology* was therefore chosen as the philosophical framework in this research, which is explained later on in this chapter.

Two main approaches to research are positivist and interpretivist, which are generally aligned to two main paradigmatic foundations, namely quantitative approaches (for the measurement of a phenomenon) and qualitative approaches (for the explanation of a phenomenon) (Bryman, 2008). Given that the research questions in this research are concerned with both measuring and explaining cyberbullying, it was necessary to adopt a mixed paradigmatic stance, thereby drawing inspiration from both positivist and interpretivist paradigms (Cohen *et al*., 2011). A more inclusive research design was therefore achieved, encompassing both exploratory and explanatory elements in order to investigate the lived experience of participants. Furthermore, the interplay and connectedness of the different aspects of cyberbullying were better understood through employing a mixed paradigmatic approach. For example, in the discussion chapter, open and closed questionnaire findings and data from the interviews were brought together in order that more depth could be added to discussion points.

3.3 Epistemology and Ontology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge; how it is gained from the world around us by asking questions of people and observing behaviour (Cohen *et al*., 2011). In this research, knowledge was gained through reviewing the literature, then by posing questions and gathering data from participants, which was then analysed and discussed in light of the literature. The phenomenological orientation of this research sees data as being contained within the perspectives and lived experiences of participants. The epistemological assumption in positivist research is that knowledge exists, waiting to be discovered, which contrasts with the constructionist view that social actors construct knowledge by, and for,

themselves through their interaction with their world and with other social actors (Bryman, 2008). Given the mixed paradigmatic nature of the research questions, a dual epistemological stance was necessary. At a methodological level, this involved the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gathering data, in order to ensure data was gathered from participants to answer the research questions.

Ontology refers to the notion of reality and existence, which is the result of a person's interaction and interpretation of the world they live in and experience (Friesen, 2012). In positivist research, reality is seen as objective and singular, contrasting with a subjective and multi-faceted reality in interpretivist research (Cohen *et al*., 2011). Given that cyberbullying is a behavioural and socially constructed phenomenon, perceptions of reality can differ depending on a person's experience and interactions with cyberbullying. Therefore, it is clear that people can have a reality or perceptions of reality that might be different from how another person perceives their reality or than of someone else. Such differences can be seen in the literature review, for example with conceptual and measurement issues that were raised in determining cyberbullying through an intention to harm and repetition, and also through the same person cyberbullying two different people in the same way, one of whom thought they were a victim and the other not.

Friesen (2012, n.p.) recognised the subjectivity of individual experience by posing the question: 'How can your truth be right if my experience is something else?' This was answered by Friesen (ibid, n.p.) in the context of bullying:

> *[I]t is individual experience that determines personal worth and essence, and not a rational, intellectual understanding.*

Reality is shaped through the lived experiences, perspectives and opinions of different groups of social actors. Each has a unique viewpoint, which can ground and shift the boundaries of knowledge, shed new light on cyberbullying, and provide a triangulated and more holistic understanding the phenomenon. My role is this process was to design research instruments that allowed participants to provide details of their experience, and then to make sense of the participants' world from responses they provided, which related to their own experience and perspective of cyberbullying. This was enlightening for me and empowering for the participants as they were given a *voice*, which 16–19 year olds have hitherto lacked in cyberbullying research.

As the findings later on reveal, a range of cyberbullying experiences were reported, and it was possible that many different realities exist, not only because people participants had different experiences, but also because they might perceive the same phenomenon in a different way. What was important to this research, however, is that individuals had—and were capable of expressing, in their own words—their own perspective and meaning of their world and their experiences. This meant that two levels of reality were reported: the *shape of the world*, a reality reflected by all participants who responded to the questionnaire, which gave a reality based on collective experience, and *individual experience*, based on realities and perceptions of those who were interviewed about their experiences with cyberbullying.

However, the validity of self-reports of participants who state they have, or have not, been cyberbullied might be questioned. The researcher is mindful of such as threat to the validity of self-reports, and as will be seen below, the methodology and procedures are explicit so that the effect on the validity of findings is reduced. Notwithstanding this, it is possible that participants might not report being cyberbullied, or otherwise report being cyberbullied, because of their perception and experience of what is meant by cyberbullying. For example, Juvonen and Graham (2001) used the labels 'deniers' (those who were seen as victims by peers, but did not report being a themselves) and 'paranoids' (those who reported being a victim, but were not nominated as such by peers) when there were discrepancies between self-reports and peer nominations. Although this measure of deciding who is a victim, or otherwise, is not conclusive or without invalidity, it does highlight problems with self-reporting in survey research. Further treatment of this matter is discussed in Chapter 5.

3.4 Methodological Orientations

The two main methodological foundations in research are *quantitative* and *qualitative* (Cohen *et al.,* 2012). A combination of these traditions is referred to as *mixed methods,* which was used in this research. Quantitative methodology is concerned with objectively measuring phenomena by answering questions such as *how many?* and *how much*? (Dawson, 2009). This approach was useful for measuring, for example, the prevalence level of cyberbullying and other data that was capable of being measured, such as the closed questions in the questionnaire. The aggregation of this data facilitated the comparison of findings of this research with other research in the literature review. Bryman (2008) draws attention to the

limits of quantitative approaches to research, including not being readily able to take into account and understand the lived experiences of participants. Therefore, understanding people's lives through quantitative approaches can be more difficult compared to the same aim in qualitative-based research. However, closed questions do allow participants to provide details of their experiences, even if choosing from pre-determined response options. What is limited though, is the variation and depth of responses in closed questions, which can restrict the collection of rich descriptions. This point is significant because of the importance of being able to collect data pertaining to the lived experiences of participants.

Research in the qualitative paradigm tends to explore the attitudes, behaviours and experiences of participants (Dawson, 2009). The emphasis is more on the explanation of social facts using narrative and meanings provided by participants, whilst recognising that meanings are fluid as opposed to fixed, and interpretations are subjective rather than objective (Plowright, 2011). Such features of the qualitative approach were central to understanding the lived experiences of students who were involved in cyberbullying, as importance was placed on their individual lived experience and how *they* made sense of *their* world, rather than it being imposed on them by me or other people. Providing those who were 16–19 years old in colleges with the opportunity to share their experiences relating to cyberbullying was very important to this research, in order to understand cyberbullying better in this context and age group.

Bryman (2008) recognised the traditional dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative approaches to research, both in terms of data collection methods and also in the epistemological and ontological approaches of positivism and

constructivism. By adopting a mixed methods approach, the philosophical perspectives from both quantitative and qualitative approaches were included in this research. The mixed methodological design utilised components of both quantitative and qualitative approaches and resulted in increased breadth and depth of data. That is, not only did the quantitative data provide the *shape of the world* in terms of statistics from a large sample, but the inclusion of qualitative data resulted in 'thick' descriptions of cyberbullying experiences that not only explained behaviour and experience, but also the context in which those experiences occurred.

3.5 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the philosophical study of phenomena; the nature and meaning of human experience and consciousness. It is an approach founded in the 20th Century by German philosophers Franz Brentano (1838–1917) and Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), and developed by Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) (Groenewald, 2004). Phenomenology means 'the study of that which appears' (Sanders, 1982, p.354), from the Greek '*phainomenon'*, which means *appearance*. Sanders (ibid) defined phenomenology as:

> *The study of conscious phenomena…an analysis of the way in which things or experiences show themselves…making explicit the implicit structure and meaning of human experiences.*

Phenomenology is aligned with an interpretivist epistemology, which views the world as pre-reflective and where phenomena precedes knowledge, and a constructivist ontology, where knowledge and reality are seen as subjective and created by the interactions and experiences of people in society. The approach to

collecting data falls under the qualitative paradigm, with interviews being the main method of data collection (Englander, 2012). The central aim of phenomenology is to uncover individual experience from the unique view of the participants (Andretta, 2007; Balls, 2009).

There are two main phenomenological traditions, namely *descriptive*, created by Husserl, and *hermeneutic*, subsequently developed by Heidegger. Descriptive phenomenology requires the researcher to adopt a phenomenological attitude called *bracketing*, which involves setting aside what the researcher already knows about a topic, including any preconceptions, and refraining from the use of any external frameworks relating to the phenomenon being researched (Sanders, 1982). Using this approach, data is collected without bias or presupposition by the researcher, at least initially, thus the descriptions that participants provide are treated as pure data; that is, no meaning has yet been attached to them (Finlay, 2009). This allows participants to provide details of their experiences without imposition or dispute from the researcher so that their experiences can be more accurately described (Chan *et al.* 2013). Husserl recognised the importance of researcher being detached from the participant in order to reduce bias and subjectivity in collecting data.

The hermeneutic approach to phenomenology, however, does not advocate bracketing as a process, but instead encourages the researcher to use their own experiences and import external frameworks to interpret participants' experiences (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Balls, 2009). In contract to Husserl, Heidegger did not consider bracketing to be feasible and instead argued that researchers needed to be

aware of their own preconception and beliefs about a phenomenon in order to examine the phenomenon in greater detail (Finlay, 2009).

Chan *et al.* (2013) argued that in practical terms, the concept of bracketing might be difficult because it is humanly impossible to put aside everyone one knows and believes about a phenomenon. As is usually the case, researchers conduct literature reviews in order to gain an insight into the research field and develop knowledge and beliefs about what they have found at this stage. Instead, Chan *et al.* (2013) suggested that researchers should be honest about their biases and preconceptions and make a conscious effort to limit the imposition of these in the data collection and analysis processes. Finlay (2009) explained that phenomenologists accept the inevitability of researcher subjectivity, but it can be controlled and be limited by researchers consciously adopting bracketing as a phenomenological attitude. By doing so, the researcher demonstrates they are collecting data with an open attitude to see the world freshly and places relative importance on *the participant's experience*, rather than the researcher's experience.

Finlay (2009) highlighted concerns over those researchers who claim to be following a Husserlian (descriptive) approach, despite the fact that the researcher had not engaged in bracketing. Finlay (2009) also emphasised the naivety and confusion of those who claimed to follow a hermeneutic approach, but had bracketed their own presuppositions, which Heidegger discouraged. Finlay (2009, p.9) suggested the following applied in such cases:

> *[I]t is perhaps best to view research which does not fully embrace the phenomenological project's commitment to description and the research as*

having an open phenomenological attitude as 'phenomenologically inspired' or 'phenomenologically orientated.'

Giorgi (1986) preferred to view description and interpretation as a continuum rather than as dichotomous choices, where researchers use more or less one or a combination of the two. This highlights the possible difficulties with bracketing in phenomenology; however, the process and extent of bracketing is dependent on the ability/preference of the researcher in their own research undertaking. Bracketing can be achieved by ensuring interviews are transcribed verbatim and described according to the participants experiences only, as this process does not involve any interpretation by the researcher. However, interpretation is needed in order to understand the experiences of the participant and how they compare to other participants. Interpretation is also needed in order to achieve understanding of the phenomenon as a whole, as well as how participants' experiences apply to other contexts and theoretical frameworks. In this research the process of analysis was sequential rather than dichotomous; descriptive first and then interpretive.

The language used in phenomenology when describing methodological processes can be complex, which can pose a barrier to its understanding and application to research. Below are descriptions of the main concepts in phenomenological research:

- Intentionality: refers to the *consciousness* of an object (phenomenon) and a participant's interpretation of/relationship with it (Sanders, 1982). A person's consciousness can include their experiences, perception, memory and fantasy. The researcher's role is to uncover the relationship between an object and the person experiencing it, thereby explicating the

intentionality from the participant's consciousness (Creswell, 2009). The intentionality of the phenomenon as a whole can be understood by bringing together the *noema* and *noesis*.

- Noema: This is the objective nature of a person's consciousness, and includes what they reveal about their experiences and perceptions of a phenomenon. These accounts considered to be objective in that they come from the participant and not from the researcher (Sanders, 1982)
- Noesis: This is the subjective and intuitive interpretation made by the researcher of a person's consciousness. The researcher is considered to be subjective as they bring in their own understanding of the phenomenon to interpret the conscious descriptions of the participants. Sanders (1982) explained that the essences of a phenomenon are derived from bringing together and analysing both the object as perceived by the participant (noema) and the subjective apprehension of the object/experience by the researcher (noesis).
- Epoché (bracketing): as described above, this refers to the essential attitude a phenomenologist should adopt when conducting research with participants. It involves the researcher temporarily suspending their knowledge or judgement about a phenomenon, including any personal presuppositions, perceptions, meanings, beliefs, biases, theoretical concepts and opinions (Groenewald, 2004). This process facilitates in getting to the pure essences of the phenomenon without allowing their personal experiences or perceptions to get in the way. Furthermore, by bracketing, the researcher is able to attend more to the views of participants and see the world through their view, rather than their own.

- Eidetic reduction: This is the process of revealing essences from participants' experiences through the use of intuition and reflection. This process involves subjectivity as the researcher interprets the descriptions of participants (Finlay, 2009). Eidetic reduction is part of the data analysis process of phenomenology, which is discussed in greater detail later on.

The rationale for using a phenomenological approach in this research owed much to the acknowledgement that cyberbullying is a phenomenon that needs investigating from the points of view of 16–19 year olds in colleges because of the lack of attention of this age group and context to date.

Phenomenology looks through the lenses of the participants and their experiences and participants—rather than the researcher—provided meaning to their own experiences. Using phenomenological lenses, it became clearer how cyberbullying lives and breathes in post-16 education. Despite phenomenology being a qualitative methodology, I argue that a phenomenological approach is also capable of dealing with questions with absolute measurement that have objective structures, as well as answering questions with subjective elements. The way in which phenomenology is able to deal with absolute questions, such as '*Have you been a victim of cyberbullying?*' rests on the fact that participants are able to interpret for themselves what *victim*, *bully* and *cyberbullying* mean. Furthermore, participants were able to provide details of their experiences in the open questions of the questionnaire, which provided another dimension of understanding the perspectives and experiences of cybervictims and cyberbullies.

3.5.1 The Use of Phenomenology in Bullying and Cyberbullying Research

Several studies were identified in the research literature, which adopted a phenomenological approach to studying victims' experiences of bullying and cyberbullying. However, despite the few studies cited below, deep and meaningful information and perspectives from cyberbullies and cybervictims of their own lived experiences were not widely apparent in the literature.

In Bowles and Lesperance (2004), a phenomenological approach was chosen to examine the lived experiences of three victims of bullying aged 12-14 years old. The researchers recognised that little was understood in the literature about what being bullied means to those who had endured it. The researchers' aim was to use phenomenology to attempt to explicate the meaning that participants gave to being bullied. The researchers also recognised that despite much published research on bullying, little qualitative research exists that purports to understand the lived experiences of participants. Such research was essential in understanding cyberbullying, in formulating new research questions, and to guide future research. Rivituso (2014) utilised a purposive sampling method to interview four participants that had experience with cyberbullying as cybervictims. The data were analysed using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), which allowed the researcher to understand and interpret the meaning that participants gave to their experiences. The use of phenomenology in particular was effective because it allowed the researcher to get as close as possible to the personal experiences of an individual.

The researchers in the work of Omizo *et al*. (2006) used a phenomenological research design to answer the question *What does the bully and the victim*

experience? They conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 school children who had identified themselves as a victim of bullying or a bully. The researchers recognised the value of a phenomenological research design as producing effective qualitative support for experimental data as well as to gain a closer perspective of the problem of bullying.

Mackay *et al*. (2011) used a phenomenological design in their research to improve their understanding of cyberbullying through the experiences of cybervictims. They conducted semi-structured interviews with three participants aged 11–15 years. The sample in Boyd (2012) consisted of eight graduate students, which allowed in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. Phenomenology was chosen in order to listen to the voices of cyberbullying victims and to translate their individual voices into a collective response to cyberbullying victimisation.

What was similar in the research outlined above was that the main reasons for using phenomenology was to explore the lived experiences of cyberbullying and to understand it from the perspective being a bully or being bullied or cyberbullied. The studies above all used interviews to collect data to describe participants' experiences, which were then interpreted. The sample size in phenomenological research is usually not predetermined, however, sample sizes tend to be small, as in the research above, to help to preserve the individual meaning from each participant. Finlay (2009) and Englander (2012) suggested that at least three participants are needed in phenomenological research to provide enough variation and depth of experiences in order to understand the meaning of a phenomenon. On the face of it, three participants seems a small number, but if the

depth and variation of experience is relatively rich, then three might be a sufficient number with which to conduct phenomenological research.

3.6 Research Design

A mixed methods enquiry, adopted through a phenomenological lens, was used in this research. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students in colleges and interviews were used to gather in depth experiences with cybervictims. The questionnaire was used to capture mostly quantitative data, which generated statistics that provided information about the shape of the world of cyberbullying in colleges. The questionnaire also included various open questions in an effort to capture the perceptions and experiences of participants. Interviews were used to gather the experiences of those affected by cyberbullying. The aim of using a mixed methods research design centred on uncovering the essential structures of the phenomenon that otherwise might have been missed or not collected had just one method or approach been used.

3.6.1 Population and Sample

The population in this research comprised 16–19 year olds studying in colleges in England. The estimated size of the population, when the data was collected in March 2014, was 1,367,000 (DfE, 2014b). Since it is usually impracticable in research to gather data from the whole population due to various restrictions with time, cost, access, and willingness to participate, a sample of the population is more practical. Bryman (2008) explained that a carefully chosen sample could be representative of the population, and the findings from such a sample can therefore be generalisable to the population from which they were chosen. In

qualitative research, generalisability tends not to be the aim; rather, it seeks to explain what is happening to a small group of people. The outcomes from such a sample might provide insight into the population as a whole; however, findings for other members or groups within the population might differ (Cohen *et al*., 2011).

In this research, a non-random, convenience sampling strategy was used to collect questionnaire data (Bryman, 2008). This was a convenience sample because the participants were drawn from those that were accessible and available at the time, and that were willing to take part in the research (Oppenheim, 1992). Bauman *et al*. (2013) suggested that a large proportion of studies—not only those focusing on cyberbullying—used convenience sampling due to the ease of access for participants. For the interviews, a purposeful sample was chosen as participants needed to meet certain criteria; to be a cyberbully and / or a cybervictim.

The combination of exploratory and explanatory questions in this research, and the use of both questionnaires and interviews to inform the research questions, this not only allowed generalisations to the population to be made, but also provided specific experiences of cyberbullying. This is why the questionnaire collected data from a large number of participants whilst a relatively small number were interviewed. Because of the phenomenological nature of the research, the convenience sampling strategy, and the need not to restrict data collection, a pre-determined sample limit was not set for the questionnaire or interviews.

3.6.2 Ethics

There were four main principles to consider when conducting this research: ensuring no harm to participants; providing informed content; privacy; and not being deceptive. The British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011, p.5), provided information on informed consent, which they explained as:

> *the condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress, prior to the research getting under way*

Ethical approval for this research was granted by Warwick University (Appendix A). Participants were provided with informed consent in the *Information for Participants* section of the online questionnaire, prior to answering any questions. This information included details of anonymity, voluntary participation, being able to withdraw at any time and the right not to answer any questions. Questionnaire participants were not asked to provide any contact details or their name to assure them with anonymity. Interview participants signed and returned a consent form prior to being interviewed (Appendix C). The names of interview participants were changed in the writing up of this research to ensure they were anonymous. Interviews were advised that their responses would be confidential, but absolute confidentially was not guaranteed in case they made a disclosure that suggested they were at risk of harming themselves or other people.

Ethical dilemmas arose when two cybervictims disclosed self-harm in their interview. Given that I had already reviewed some of the questionnaire data by this time, I was aware that some cybervictims had self-harmed, and therefore this would potentially arise in the interviews. The interview participants were aware that absolute confidentially was not guaranteed. My thought process when these

disclosures were made was to determine the risk to the participant and to other people, in line with the framework I was working to in relation to confidentially and reporting. The options I had in each of these cases was to disclose this information to the college where the participant studied, which was identifiable from the email addresses they used to contact me, or to keep this information confidential and not to disclose. The decision I made in both of these particular cases was not to disclose and break confidentially because the two cybervictims were not currently self-harming and were describing situations in the past where they had self-harmed. Furthermore, through sensitive questioning, it was established that they did not intend to self-harm again. Therefore, the risk that participants were at harm to themselves or to other people was judged to be low, and details about the participants' self-harming was not disclosed.

3.6.3 Self-completion Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed online using the site www.esurveyspro.com. An online questionnaire was used due to the time and cost efficiencies of using technology to collect and analyse data. This also meant that respondents could complete the survey in their own time and space, making the questionnaire less intimidating and intrusive for participants than if the questionnaire had to be completed at a prescribed time and place. Bauman *et al*. (2013) explained the advantages associated with online data collection as allowing more marginalised groups to participate, in private, without the stigma of identifying him or herself. Therefore, as opposed to making students fill out the questionnaire in lessons, alongside their peers and teachers, some students might be more comfortable completing the survey in their own time and space. However, I was conscious that

this could result in lower response rates as participants might not have completed the questionnaire if they were not supervised doing at a specific time and space.

The questions were informed by those used in other cyberbullying research in the literature and those develop by research according to the research questions. Both open and closed questions were generated given the measurement and explanatory nature of the research questions. The closed questions generated standardised data, which made the responses quicker and easier to code and analyse. Closed questions were also used because they tend to be easier for participants to answer, meaning they might have been more likely to answer the questions and complete the questionnaire (Bryman, 2008). However, because participants had to choose from pre-determined options to these questions, this could have resulted in a lack of spontaneity in answers as participants if participants were forced to make a choice that did not apply to them (Oppenheim, 1992). This meant that response options not included could have led to missed opportunities in collecting new data. This was not ideal when considering the phenomenological design of this research; however, this was a relative necessity in order to collect statistical data on the nature of the phenomenon on a national scale. In any case, most closed questions contained an *Other* response option in an effort to collect data that fell outside the prescribed options.

The open questions allowed participants the flexibility and freedom to provide their own responses, in their own words, about their perspectives and experiences. This approach was in the spirit of the phenomenological design of this research. This allowed a wider range of responses, and did not restrict answers, which allowed for the gathering of new data.

Using the features of site www.esurveyspro.com, *skip logic* was incorporated, that the questions that participants answered were based on their responses to previous questions, rather than having to view and complete all questions, some of which may have been irrelevant to them based on their experiences. For example, if participants indicated that they were not a cybervictim or a cyberbully, they then would not see or answer subsequent questions relating to these experiences. The aim of this was to personalise the questionnaire according to participants' experiences and allow easier navigation. Readers can access the online questionnaire at http://goo.gl/6lldYN to navigate through the pages and questions. A version of the questionnaire can be seen in Appendix B (n.b. there is variation with the inclusion of the term 'college' between questions, and an error in the wording of question 13).

The questionnaire contained 50 questions in total, but participants only answered the questions that related to their experiences. Therefore, the total number of questions participants answered varied according to their experiences. The table on the next page provides an overview the questions/focus that related to each of the four research questions (a key is provided beneath the table) following by a description of how the questionnaire was laid out. Not all of the questions in the questionnaire were analysed in this research due to word restrictions and the need to focus and provide answers to the four research questions chosen. Data from questions not analysed in this thesis will form the focus for future research. The full questionnaire can be seen in Appendix B.

Table 8: Questionnaire items relating to each of the four research questions

Question No.	Research Question	Question / Focus
6	0	Time spent using technology in a typical day
7	0	Access to technology
15	0	General perceptions of cyberbullying
12	1	Have you been cyberbullied since being a college student?
13	1	Have you been physically or verbally been bullied since being a student?
14	1	Experience of bullying and cyberbullying at secondary school
25	1	Have you cyberbullied anyone since being a college student?
26	1	Have you physically or verbally bullied anyone since being a college student?
27	1	Open question about experiences of being a cybervictim.
28	1	Number of occasions of being a cybervictim
29	1	Where did the cyberbullying take place?
30	1	How long did the cyberbullying last?
32	1	Who cyberbullied you?
41	1	Open question about experiences of being a cyberbully.
42	1	Number of occasions of being a bully
1	2	Are you male or female?
2	2	How old are you?
4	2	How would you define your ethnic origin?
5	2	Receipt of financial support
8	2	Details of disability
9	2	How do you define your sexual orientation?
10	2	Details of criminal activity.
17	2	Involvement of gender in cyberbullying
18	2	Details of involvement of gender in cyberbullying
33	2	Gender of those who were cyberbullying
34	2	Ethnicity of those who were cyberbullying
43	2	Gender of those cyberbullied
31	3	Reasons for being cyberbullied
45	3	Reasons for cyberbullying others
46	3	Characteristics of cybervictims involved in reasons for cyberbullying
36	4	What feelings did you experience when you were cyberbullied?
37	4	Impact on overall mental wellbeing / health?
38	4	Use of technology after being cyberbullied.
39	4	Other negative consequences of being cyberbullied
44	4	Did you feel any remorse (regret) after cyberbullying someone?

0 – Overview of sample, 1 – Prevalence, 2 – Groups, 3 – Reasons, 4 – Consequences

At the start of the questionnaire, participants were provided with information about the research, the purpose of the questionnaire and their rights (see Appendix B). The widely cited definition of cyberbullying (see, for example: Li, 2006, p.2) was provided to participants in the preface to the questionnaire:

> *[T]he use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others.*

The inclusion of this definition was not intended to constrain participants' understanding of cyberbullying, but rather to bestow meaning to a term they may have heard without knowing its suggested meaning. However, participants were also told it was fine if they had their own meaning of the term. It was important to include this information so that participants would feel empowered to construct for themselves their own meaning of cyberbullying, and not take as given a pre-determined meaning provided to them. McDougall (1999) did not provide a definition of bullying as the researcher wanted students to form their own concept of what bullying constituted. Although the reason given was useful, participants should at least be informed of the reasoning behind the lack of definition in an effort to help frame their approach in responding to the questionnaire.

After reading this information, participants were asked to provide demographic information, including their gender, age, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, and details of any disabilities. Following these initial questions, participants were then asked whether they had experienced bullying or cyberbullying as a victim at school or college. Asking these questions allowed cyberbullying to be understood in a wider sense. Further questions relating to cyberbullying were asked in an effort to give a voice to all students answering the questionnaire, not just those

who had been a victim. Participants were then asked whether they had been a bully or cyberbully.

All questions so far were available for all participants to answer. Based on the responses given to the questions '*Have you been a cybervictim at college?'* and '*Have you been a cyberbully at college*?', subsequent questions related to these experiences according to the skip logic incorporated in the questionnaire. Participants who had answered 'No' to being a cyberbully or cybervictim were automatically referred to a page thanking them for their participation in the survey.

Participants who identified themselves as being a cybervictim were asked to use their own words to explain what had happened. This was important to the phenomenological design of the research, and represented an opportunity for victims to use their voice. Cybervictims were then asked further questions, including how many times they had been cyberbullied, where the cyberbullying had taken place, how long it had lasted, the reasons for being cyberbullied and the consequences of being cyberbullied.

Participants who identified themselves as a cyberbully were asked to describe in their own words what they had done, which gave them the opportunity to use their voice, again part of the phenomenological design of this research. Cyberbullies were then questioned about the frequency of the bullying, who they cyberbullied, and whether or not they felt any remorse for what they had done. They were then asked about their reasons for cyberbullying someone else, and whether certain features of their victim had anything to do with the cyberbullying.

At the end of the questions, participants were thanked for their time and the information they had provided, and advised to contact someone at their college, or to contact the researcher, if they wanted to speak about cyberbullying in any further detail, or if they had any concerns.

Questionnaire Pilot

The questionnaire was piloted with students at my place of work: a sixth form college in the West Midlands. The pilot was conducted in November 2013 using a convenience sample of 19 students from a class of A-level psychology students. The purpose of the pilot was to assess the appropriateness and wording of the questions to check how long participants took to complete the questionnaire, and to check the clarity of instructions. The pilot group were provided with a schedule of questions, which can be seen in Appendix E.

Oppenheim (1992, p.42, original emphasis) suggested '*everything* about the questionnaire should be piloted; nothing should be excluded'. For this reason, the skip logic function was deactivated for the pilot study so that all of the questions were visible and could be answered by the pilot group. Furthermore, since I would not be present during the completion of the questionnaire, it was important gain feedback on all questions to limit issues with participants not understanding questions during completion. However, I did provide my email address on the *Information for Participants* section of the questionnaire so participants could make contact to ask questions. No questions were received.

The feedback from the pilot group was collated and analysed. The mean time taken to complete the questionnaire was ten minutes, based on answering and reviewing *all* questions. Overall, the pilot group indicated the following: that the

information and instructions were clear; the questions were easy to follow; they felt comfortable with answering all questions; the questions were set out in a clear and logical order; the questionnaire had a good appearance; the questionnaire was an appropriate length. Minor changes were made to the questionnaire to reflect spelling and typographical errors. The findings of the pilot group did not contribute to the data of the main research since the main data collection period took place in March and I wanted participants to complete the questionnaire based on their experience at this time in the year. The pilot group students were advised that they could complete the questionnaire in March.

Procedure

In December 2013, a Freedom of Information Request (FOIR) was submitted to the Department for Education (DfE, 2013; 2014c) requesting the names and contact details for colleges in England. The information requested was provided in the form of a spreadsheet extracted from *Edubase*, an education database. The data was sorted according to *Phase of education*, which revealed 415 post-16 institutions, which included sixth-form colleges, general further education colleges, and 'special' colleges (primarily for students with physical and learning disabilities). The sorted data did not include secondary schools with post-16 provisions as per the defined scope of this thesis. This would be a focus for another research enquiry.

In January 2014, the 415 colleges that formed the sampling frame on the Edubase list were emailed about the research being carried out and were invited to participate. Most of the email addresses in the spreadsheet were for a named person, usually the principal or chief executive, but others were generic contact

email addresses (for example: info@, reception@ enquiries@, for example). The message field for the email read *National Cyberbullying Survey for Colleges—for the attention of the Principal/Chief Executive*. I kept a master spreadsheet of contact details, which was updated where these were provided.

The emails that were sent to colleges throughout this research can be seen in Appendix F. Colleges were asked that if they did not want to participate to kindly provide a reason, as this information would be useful in terms of evaluating the methodology and the research as a whole. The initial responses from the colleges highlighted the willingness of colleges to get involved in the research. For illustration, some of the comments that captured the content of the positive replies are shown below:

> *I think your research will be of great importance as this is an area that is greatly underestimated in FE as cyberbullying is very prevalent* (Head of Student Support).
>
> *We would be interested in taking part in your research and March would be timely in that we are undertaking e-safety events with the student body in February* (Director of Learning).
>
> *We would like to participate. We have a number of concerns re cyberbullying and anything we can do better to understand and make appropriate responses to would be helpful* (Principal).

Colleges that requested a copy of the questionnaire to review before agreeing to participate were emailed a link to a test copy. Colleges were reassured that they would receive a copy of the anonymised findings for their institution after the data collection period, so that they could use this data to understand cyberbullying better at their college. The questionnaire was copied so that each college received a separate link to provide to students, meaning the results were specific to their college.

Other responses from colleges focused on the difficulties of taking part:

> *March clashes with several other student surveys such as the major national FE Choices survey as well as our own surveys* (Head of Student Services).
>
> *I am very sorry, but I don't feel that it is appropriate for our learners to get involved. We had feedback from our learners last year that they had been 'surveyed to death'. We carry out our own surveys. We also have had Ofsted in this year and they ask learners to complete a questionnaire and finally we are part of FE Choices survey* (Principal).
>
> *Currently, our students and staff are having to complete too many surveys. We are also preparing for an Ofsted Inspection, which is imminent. We are sorry we are unable to help you on this occasion* (PA to Vice Principal).

Many of the emails received in regard to non-participation focused on a lack of time to participate because of other surveys and preparing for other priorities.

During February 2014 instructions were sent to colleges informing them of their role in the research and to provide the links to the questionnaire to distribute to students. In order to allow many colleges and students to participate, the questionnaire was open for completion from March 1, 2014–March 31, 2014. The data were collected in March as this allowed students to settle into their college environment and lifestyle, thus helping to ensure their responses to questions would be based on the majority of the college year, rather than only part way through.

Colleges were asked to send out an email containing the questionnaire link to students in their own institutions. Several reminder emails were sent during this period in an effort to increase participation rates and to increase the representativeness of the sample. Following the deadline of March 31, 2014, the colleges that participated were emailed in order to express thanks for their participation in the research, further stating that the findings would be sent to

them following after ensuring the anonymity of data (Appendix F). Colleges were sent individual reports in May 2015.

3.7 Sample Size and Representativeness of the Sample

A total of 6,725 students from 41 colleges responded to the questionnaire emailed to colleges for distribution amongst students. Questionnaires with considerable missing data (i.e. questionnaires where participants did not provide any details at all, and those where no further details other than the respondent's demographic information were completed) were not considered (n=1,035, 15.4%). Therefore, the sample was comprised of 5,690 college students aged 16–19 years in England (the total number of participants for some of the questions differed due to various participants not answering or skipping certain questions, as part of their rights of participation). The students attended one of 41 colleges that participated out of a total 415 colleges in England. Of the 41 colleges involved in the research, 21 were general further education colleges, 18 were sixth-form colleges, and 2 were special colleges. At the time of writing, there were 257 general further education colleges, 93 sixth-form colleges, and 65 special colleges in England, resulting in participation rates of 8.2%, 19.4% and 3.1%, respectively. The overall rate of colleges that participated was 9.9%. An approximate total of 82,975 students attended these 41 colleges, providing a response rate of 6.9% (Appendix H). This was a relatively low response rate, which is recognised as a limitation to the study, despite a relatively large sample size.

A total of 33 local education authorities (LEAs) were represented out of the 143 LEAs in England (23%) that have at least one college of further education or a sixth-form college. The map in Appendix I shows a fair distribution of

participation across England, which demonstrates a good level of representation. The lower participation from the South-West of England in comparison to other areas is understandable since this is a relatively rural area of England.

Demographics of the Sample and Population.

Demographic data for the population was obtained from a Freedom of Information Request (FOIR) submitted to the Department for Education (2014b; 2014c). The most up-to-date information available at the time of writing was provisional data as of September 2013, the figures for which were used in this analysis. The representativeness of the sample in terms of the population is discussed below. The population data obtained only includes information for 16–18 year olds, as this is all that was available from the Department for Education.

Gender

Table 9: Participation of 16–18 year olds in education by gender

	Boys	Boys %	Girls	Girls %	Total
Total number of 16–18 year olds	674,100	49.3%	693,600	50.7%	1,367,000

Adapted from Department for Education (2014b). Data relates to England in 2013.

Table 10: Gender of participants in the sample

	N	%
Boys	3,253	42.6
Girls	2,416	57.4
Total	5,669	100.0

The table above shows a near-balanced proportion of boy and girl students in the population. This compares to 57% of girl participants and 43% of boy participants in the sample, which shows that girls were slightly more represented than boys compared to the population. However, the rates were not substantially dissimilar from the population.

Age

Table 11: Participation of 16–18 year olds in education and training by age

Age of student	N	%
16 years old	556,599	40.72%
17 years old	480,300	35.14%
18 years old	330,900	24.21%
Total	1,367,000	100.00%

Adapted from Department for Education (2014b). Data relates to England in 2013.

Table 12: Age of participants

	N	%
16	1,393	25
17	2,541	45.6
18	1,349	24.2
19	295	5.3
Total	5,579	100.0

The proportion of each age in the sample was as follows: 25% aged 16 years, 45.6% aged 17 years, 24.2% aged 18 years and 5.3% aged 19 years. Comparing sample figures to the population, there was a higher proportion of 17 year olds and a lower proportion of 16 year olds. Since the data was provisional as of September 2013, the higher proportion of 16 year olds makes sense since they would turn 17 over the course of the academic year. The number of 18 year olds was the same as the national population, which did not include information for 19 year olds; again, this was probably similar to national figures, as students would have aged during this time. Therefore, given weight to the above, the ages of the participants in the sample were representative of the population.

Ethnic Origin

Table 13: Participation of 16–18 year olds in education and training by ethnicity

Ethnicity	N	%
White British	895,960	75.8%
Asian	108,316	9.2%
Black	61,118	5.2%
White Other	46,007	3.9%

Mixed	42,236	3.6%
Other	16,121	1.4%
Not known/refused	12,437	1.1%
Total	1,182,195	100.0%

Adapted from Department for Education (2014b). Data relates to England in 2013.

Table 14: Ethnic origin of participants

	N	%
White British	4,290	75.4
Asian	754	13.3
White Other	220	3.9
Mixed	174	3.1
Black	143	2.5
Other	78	1.4
Total	5,689	100.0

Just over three-quarters of participants reported being White British. Asian participants were the next most common ethnicity, followed by lower rates of White Other, Mixed and Black participants. Appendix G.1 shows the full breakdown of the major categories of ethnicities in the table above and Appendix G.2 shows the breakdown of participants who selected their ethnicity as 'Other'. Ethnicities were aggregated into the categories in the above table due to smaller numbers sub-categorise not being suitable for the chi square test.

The data available for the ethnic origin shows an overall representativeness of the sample to the population. The amount of White, White Other, Mixed and Other ethnic origin classifications in the sample were comparable to the population data. There was a two percentage-point difference with Black participants in the sample (3%) compared to the population (5.2%), with most difference in the Asian population (13% in the sample compared to 9.2% in the population).

Sexual Orientation

No national information was available from the Department for Education in relation to the sexual orientation of 16–19 year olds in post-16 education. However, data collected by the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2011b) from 238,206 people in the UK in 2010 aged 16 years and older, in the table below, shows how participants defined their sexual orientation.

Table 15: Categorisation of sexual orientation of UK population aged 16 and over

Category of sexual orientation	%
Heterosexual/Straight	94.2
Gay/Lesbian	0.9
Bisexual	0.5
Other	0.5
Don't know/refusal	3.2
Non response	0.6
Total	100.0

Adapted from Office of National Statistics (2011b)

The ONS data included all age groups in England, thus the population was not the same as in this research.

Table 16: Sexual orientation of participants

	N	%
Heterosexual	4,983	89.0
Bisexual	336	6.0
Homosexual	168	3.0
Other	112	2.0
Total	5,599	100.0

Almost nine in 10 participants reported being heterosexual, with many of the remaining participants reporting to be bisexual and homosexual. Those who selected 'Other' were coded as *asexual*, *pansexual, bi-curious,* or *do not know* when describing their orientation.

The sample data shows that 89% of students reported being heterosexual, 6% bisexual, 3% homosexual and 2% as 'Other'. These rates were not dissimilar from the population of England as a whole. Nonetheless, it is important to gather data pertaining to the sexual orientation of students in post-16 education so that more accurate data regarding this specific population can be used to determine the overall representativeness of the sample.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Table 17: Participants who reported having SEND

Type of SEND	n	%
Physical Disability	136	2.5%
Autism/Asperger's Syndrome	155	2.9%
Dyslexia/literacy or numeracy problems	491	9.1%

N=5,395

The information provided in relation to SEND by the DfE (2014) related to when the students were aged 15 years old. The categories provided in the Department for Education data were very specific, and could not be easily categorised into the main headings used in this research (i.e. physical disability, Asperger's syndrome/autism, and DDLN). The data provided by the DfE can be seen in Appendix J. As such, it was difficult to draw conclusions on the representativeness of the sample to the population. However, at an arbitrary level, the data in Appendix J shows that 23% of 15 year olds had a statement of some sort (13% School Action, 6% School Action Plus, 4% Special Educational Needs. Note: since the data was provided, the terms 'School Action' and 'School Action Plus' no longer exist). This was compared to the aggregated 14.5% of the sample who reported having a physical or learning disability or difficulty. This oversimplified comparison suggests an underrepresentation of those with physical or learning disabilities in this research compared with the population as a whole.

Caution is therefore needed in placing value on such a comparison owing to the fact that the Department for Education data was based on the students at age 15 years old, and the status of those with or without SEND could have change between the age of 15 years and when the students responded to this survey. This difference could also be explained by the low participation rate of special colleges in this research (2 out of 65 institutions participated, with a total of 15 participants).

Type of Qualification Studied at College

Table 18: Type of qualification studied by participants

	N	%
AS / A levels	3,563	63.5
Vocational courses (inc. BTEC/HNC)	1,599	28.5
Other	449	8.0
Total	5,612	100.0

The majority of participants reported studying AS / A levels and almost three in 10 participants reported studying vocational qualifications. The breakdown of those who selected 'Other' qualifications is shown in Appendix G.3.

Access to Technology

Table 19: Participants' access to different types of technology

	n	%
Social networking account	5,669	99.6
Laptop / desktop computer (IA)	5,077	89.2
Smart mobile phone (IA)	5,046	88.7
Ipad / tablet	2,980	52.4
Mobile phone (WIA)	1,104	19.4
Laptop / desktop computer (WIA)	450	7.9

N=5,690 IA = Internet access WIA = Without internet access

Nearly all of the participants reported having a social networking account such as Facebook or Twitter (only 31 participants reported not having one). Around nine

in 10 participants had access to a laptop/desktop computer with internet access with a similar proportion having access to a 'smart' phone. Just over half of the respondents had access to an IPad or other tablet computer. Those who had access to a mobile phone or laptop/computer without internet access were in the minority. However, since nearly all students have a social networking account, this shows that they access this through a computer or mobile phone with internet access, perhaps at college. These findings revealed that participants had access to and used a range of technology.

Use of Technology

Table 20: Number of hours in a typical day participants used technology

	N	%
0 - 2 hours	430	7.6
2 - 4 hours	1,256	22.2
4 - 6 hours	1,545	27.3
6 - 8 hours	1,007	17.8
8 - 10 hours	600	10.6
10 or more hours	820	14.5
Total	5,658	100.0

The most frequent time participants reported using technology on a typical day was 4–6 hours, which was selected by just over one quarter of the sample. This was followed by 2–4 hours, selected by just less than one quarter of participants. Participants' selections follow a normal distribution, apart from those using technology for 10 or more hours a day, which was selected by around one in eight participants. The question did not address the extent to which time was spent on college work or for personal and social purposes.

Receipt of Financial Support

Table 21: Participants in receipt of financial support

	N	%
Yes	1,213	21.5
No	4,428	78.5
Total	5,641	100.0

Around one in five participants reported being in receipt of financial support at college, such as from a learner support fund or for free college meals.

Table 22: Free School Meal status of 16-18 year olds at aged 15 years

Status	N	%
Not in receipt of FSM	1,010,123	85.0
In receipt of FSM	172,162	15.0
Total	1,182,285	100.0

Adapted from Department for Education (2014b). Data relates to 2012/2013 FSM status aged 15.

The table above shows that 15% of pupils received Free School Meals (FSM) at age 15. The data provided was not directly related to 16–19 year olds, but the figure was comparable to the 21.5% of 16–19 year olds in the sample who reported receiving financial assistance. The difference could be explained by a change in circumstances between these different ages and because participants were asked about whether they received *any* financial assistance, whereas the population data was specific to being in receipt of FSM only.

Criminal Activity

Table 23: Participants indicating they had been involved in critical activity

	N	%
Yes	265	4.7
No	5,373	95.3

Less than one in 20 participants reported having a criminal record, being cautioned/arrested, or committing a crime. No information was available following a FOIR for the proportion of young people aged 16–19 years who have been involved in criminal activity, thus making it difficult to compare the data in the research with population data.

Overall, the sample data was sufficiently representative of the population. The sample size of 5,690 participants from 41 colleges was relatively large compared to many of the studies conducted in cyberbullying, and was the largest in respect of the 16-19 age group. A higher participation rate of special colleges may have led to increased representativeness in view of the higher participation from mainstream colleges.

3.7.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Bauman *et al*. (2013) stated that policy makers rarely interact with young people who are affected by policy design and implementation. Data collected in qualitative research can go some way to ensuring that the voices of participants are heard; in turn, this can inform policy makers of the experiences of young people and accordingly may influence policy creation and development, which is needed in the age group and context considered in this thesis.

As a qualitative method of data collection, the use of interviews allowed participants to provide details of their experiences of cyberbullying. Participants were able to provide details of their lived experiences of cyberbullying, as per the phenomenological framework of this study. These details would not have been easily obtained using questionnaires. Kowalski *et al*. (2008) recognised that questionnaires are not sufficient to 'capture the emotional impact' (p.xii) of cyberbullying. Semi-structured interviews were used because of the flexibility in allowing the interviewer to probe for further information, and to be able to add or modify questions as the interview progresses, while maintaining some consistency (Bell, 2010; Dawson, 2009). Dillman (1999) suggested that interviews give more of an opportunity to see participants as humans rather than data/subjects, placing more value on their experience and knowledge.

It was important to appreciate that the willingness of cybervictims or cyberbullies to discuss their experiences in an interview may be low considering the sensitive nature of this research. Those who experienced cyberbullying may not want to discuss their experiences at all because of the fear or embarrassment associated with exposing their status. For others, though, such an approach may have

provided the opportunity to discuss such sensitive issues, thus allowing for their voices to be heard.

An interview schedule was used to facilitate the collection of data, but the questions were asked in a different order where appropriate and additional questions introduced where needed as the interviews progressed. Despite taking more time to collect and analyse the data from each participant, interviews allow more of a natural conversation to take place, allowing new information to arise, and for new questions to be asked (Dawson, 2009). The questions chosen in the interview schedule sought to explicate the lived experiences of the participants' interactions with cyberbullying and were intended to inform the research questions and help to understand cyberbullying in greater depth. A copy of the interview schedule can be seen in Appendix D.

The interview was not piloted; instead, a copy of the consent form and interview schedule was given to two psychology teachers at my place of work. They commented that the questions were appropriate for the purpose of learning about experiences of cyberbullying, further stating that the consent form contained all the information needed for this purpose.

Procedure

Following the data collection period of the questionnaire, colleges were contacted again at the start of April 2014 with a request to forward an email asking anyone who had experienced cyberbullying as a victim or bully to email me directly if they wanted to be interviewed about their experiences. A follow-up email was sent in mid-April in an effort to increase participation rates (Appendix F).

A total of six students responded to the email requests to invite them to be interviewed about their experiences of cyberbullying. Each of the six respondents came from different colleges in England. All those who came forward were victims of cyberbullying; no emails were received from students who had engaged in cyberbullying others. Each transcript was written up as an individual case study using a descriptive phenomenological process.

Participants that emailed the researcher to take part in the research were sent a consent form by email to read, sign and send back. The consent form contained details of the researcher and their supervisor, the interview procedure, the benefits and risks of participating, details of confidentiality and anonymity, the right to withdraw, and what will happen to the findings (Appendix C). Once I had received the sign consent form, I contacted the participants by email to arrange a date and time for a telephone interview.

I called participants at the agreed date and time. After a short introduction, I read a short, standardised script before asking any questions on the interview schedule, informing participants of the purpose of the interview, which was to explore in detail their experiences with cyberbullying (Appendix D). Participants were also informed that, if they did not want to answer a question, they should say ‘pass’. The interviews were conducted by phone for time and cost efficiencies as the participants were geographically spread across England.

The interviews were not audio recorded as I thought that this would be less intrusive and less intimidating for participants. Instead, I wrote down what participants said verbatim. Participants were advised that I would be writing down what they said as they said it and so this might mean that I asked them to pause at

various points to ensure I had captured everything they said. This was to ensure I got the full account of what they said. The implication of not recording the interviews and transcribing afterwards was that the interviews were a little disjointed in places where I paused participants in order to write, but this did provide the opportunity for participants to reflect on what they had said. It also meant that as the participants were talking I was pre-occupied with writing at the same time as listening. However, I felt it was important to be sensitive to the experiences of participants and the thought that they might have opened up more about their experiences if the interview was not recorded. In future research where interviews are used to collect data, the choice would be to record the interviews, with the option that participants can choose not to be recorded. In any case, after I had typed up the transcriptions, I emailed these to participants so that they could validate that what I had recorded was a true reflection of what they had said. This was an important feature of the process as phenomenology places emphasis on the descriptions that participants provide in order that their lived experiences can be described, interpreted and analysed accurately. All participants confirmed by reply that the transcripts were a reflection of what they had said in interview.

The interview schedule started with introductory questions in an effort to put the participant as ease, such as their age, where they were from, and what they were studying at college. They were then asked whether they had been a cybervictim as a college student. The main question in the interview that followed was *Can you tell me in a much detail what happened?* This was followed by the statement *I may have some questions afterwards to explore your experiences in more detail.* This question allowed the participants to use their own words to talk about their experiences, whilst the interviewer noted everything they said, without imposition

or direction. Once the interviewee finished their account, I used follow-up questions on the interview schedule. The purpose of these questions was to provide breadth and depth to the experiences of the participant of their experiences of cyberbullying in greater detail. After all the questions on the interview schedule has been asked, participants were thanked for their time and advised that the researcher would be in touch in order to validate what had been said. The interviews lasted for an average time of 65 minutes.

As well as the six interviewees, a case study of another victim of cyberbullying was included, which was provided from a family known to me, referred to in this research as 'Sasha's Story'. This case study was included at the request of the family, who believed it was important that their daughter's experience of being bullied was captured. I agreed to include it in this research since only six cybervictims came forward for interview and, more importantly, not to forego the opportunity of dismissing the experiences of young people affected by cyberbullying. Sasha's story was a co-constructed narrative between Sasha and the Mother, and was therefore written and presented in the third person; the interviews were written in the first person as they are *direct* and *individual* accounts of the participants.

Demographic Information of Interviewees

The table below provides a summary of the demographics of the six participants who were interviewed about their experiences. 'Sasha' is also included as a case study.

Table 24: Demographic information of interview participants

Pseudonym	Cybervictim at College	Age	Gender	Ethnicity

Lucy	Yes	17	Girl	White–German
Laura	Yes	17	Girl	White–British
Sarah	No	17	Girl	White–British
Sasha	Yes	17	Girl	White-British
Katie	No	18	Girl	White–British
Angela	No	18	Girl	White–British
David	Yes	18	Boy	White–British

All seven teenagers were victims of bullying or cyberbullying, but only four were victims of cyberbullying as a college student. The experiences of the interviewees who reported not being cyberbullied at college were used in this study, not least because their experiences of being bullied/cyberbullied at school had an impact on them when at college. This highlights the importance of research on cyberbullying having a broader scope to take into account the wider experiences of victims.

The interviewees were all White; six were born in Britain and one in Germany. All but one were girls. The victims were aged either 17 or 18 years old; no one aged 16 or 19 years old came forward to be interviewed about their experiences. In terms of this information, the students interviewed were not seen to directly reflect the questionnaire sample or the population. However, the purpose of interviews/case studies was not to generalise to the population. Instead, the aim of the phenomenological design of this research placed importance on gathering the lived experiences of those experiencing cyberbullying. Nevertheless, a greater range of students' voices would have been collected if the demographics were more balanced in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and being a cyberbully.

3.7.2 Treatment of Data

Following the data collection period, the questionnaire data were downloaded from www.esurveyspro.com into a master Excel spreadsheet on my personal laptop. Both the laptop and file were password protected, and only I am able to gain access to the laptop and to the data file. The responses from each college were checked to ensure anonymity of participants before being saved into a PDF file, which was sent to colleges in June 2014. The aim of this was to enable colleges to use the specific findings to facilitate understanding and improvement across their college. This represented a direct positive impact of this research to the wider community.

The verbatim interview notes were typed up into transcriptions into separate password protected files on my laptop. The names of the interviewees were changed to ensure anonymity in the writing-up process. Interview participants were emailed a copy of the transcript in order to validate what had been typed up. Each interviewee confirmed that the transcripts were an accurate reflection of what they had said. The transcripts were printed in order to facilitate their analysis, and were kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office when not in use. I shredded the hard copy transcripts after writing up the discussion chapter. All data and documents relating to this research were stored in a password protected file on my laptop.

3.8 Data Analysis

Analysis of Quantitative Data

The questionnaire data was downloaded from www.esurveyspro.com into a master Excel spreadsheet, and then imported into SPSS (Version 22) for analysis. The data collected for closed questions were broken down by response to each item and SPSS was used to calculate the frequency of responses of each response option. This resulted in descriptive statistics. For example, for the question '*What is your gender?'* the SPSS output provided the raw numbers and percentages for the response options (boys and girls) as follows: boys: 3,253 (42.6%), girls: 2,416 (57.4%), N=5,669. Data to all closed questions, which cover all four of the research questions, are presented in tables in the next chapter.

Inferential statistics were also calculated, using the chi square test, in order to measure the association between categorical data. For example, for gender, 'boys' and 'girls' were tested against being a 'cyberbully' and then against being a 'cybervictim'). This was used to help determine which demographic groups were disproportionately involved in cyberbullying as a victim or bully.

A 95% confidence level (p=0.05) was used for this research, which is the level at which SPSS is set at by default, and is the most common level chosen in research. At this level, chance as a factor in the associations between variables was limited to 5%, or one in 20 cases. If the result of a chi square test is $p<0.05$, this shows that the association between the variables tested is *statistically significant*. This means that the difference between the expected and actual counts in the categorical data tested did not occur by random chance. That is to say that there is a relationship between the two variables. However, the chi square test is *only*

intended to test the probability of independence of data; it does not explain what the relationship is between the data. For example, the relationship between 'gender' (boys and girls) and 'being a cyberbully' (yes and no) was tested using chi square. The proportion of cyberbullies for each gender was: boys (65.6%) and girls (34.4%). In terms of the whole sample, 2.9% of boys reported being a cyberbully compared to 1.1% of girls. The chi square result was X^2 (1, n= 4,891) = 20.59, $p<0.001$. The 'P' value is less than 0.05 which shows that a statistically significant relationship exists between 'gender' and 'being a cyberbully'. The result shows that boys are more likely to be cyberbullies than girls and that this result is statistically significant. However, the result does not indicate *what* the relationship is or *why* it exists. This is where subjectivity can be introduced into the analysis as this process relies on researchers to attempt to discuss the factors behind the result.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

The central aim of phenomenology is uncovering the lived experiences of participants by making explicate the implicit meaning and structure of a phenomenon. However, there was a lack of clarity in the literature concerning how best to achieve this. Whilst an established methodology or analytical framework for phenomenological research is lacking in the literature, a process was developed by drawing inspiration from the processes that several researchers had used in their research (see Sanders, 1982; Kleiman, 2004; Groenewald 2004; Finlay, 2009; Boyd, 2012). The below is a reflection and integration of the steps used by these researchers to provide a framework of handing and analysing the qualitative data from the interviews. Below this framework, an account is given as

to how this process was used and adapted to analyse interview data and responses to open items in the questionnaire. Although it was not possible to physically explicate my thought process to each of these steps, I have included images of the steps that I took in analysing the qualitative data in Appendix M.

1. *Transcribe the interview data* accurately.
2. *Read each transcript* fully in order to develop a sense of the whole experience, and *make notes of anything that interests the researcher*, suspending as much as possible the researcher's beliefs and knowledge in an attempt to give meaning to the participants' experiences (*bracketing*).
3. *Read the transcript multiple times* to become familiar and immersed in the data. *Make reflective notes on each transcript* and organise the data into sections or themes. Coding can be used to identify themes in the transcripts and notes.
4. *Phenomenological (eidetic) reduction* takes place by writing concise statements of importance from the notes and codes. The words of the participants should be used as much as possible.
5. *Write a summary of each interview* and cluster the emergent themes and perceptions from each transcript that has a similar focus. Note and compare similarities and differences between the experiences of each participant.
6. *Conduct participant validation* to check for accuracy. This increases the credibility of the process, and helps to ensure the researcher has interpreted the data correctly and has bracketed their own experiences or perceptions.

7. *Write up each theme separately* by elaborating on the findings, and discuss them in the context of theoretical frameworks. Triangulate findings with previous literature and other data collected. Intuition and reflection occurs through interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Interview Data

The interview transcripts were typed up in Microsoft Word and printed. The process below was followed for each transcript.

The transcript was read in full without making any notes in order to get a sense of the participant's experience. The transcript was read a second time; text was highlighted and notes were made about the participant's experience that seemed important and were interesting. I was conscious of my knowledge and preconceptions, but engaged in bracketing in this stage by using open coding and remained close to the transcript by only reflecting the codes and notes from the participant's descriptions. The transcript was read a third time to check that coding and note making was complete and to identify any themes that has emerged in the participant's experience. A separate piece of paper was used to record the codes used in the transcript and for any words, phrases and quotes that seemed most important from the experience.

Once the above process had been followed for each transcript, a matrix was drawn that included participants' names and the codes that had emerged from each transcript. The transcripts were read a fourth time to check for themes and similarities between transcripts and these were recorded in the matrix along with existing codes. This matrix provided an overview of the codes and themes in

participants' experiences. The process that I followed is illustrated by photographic images in Appendix M.

The transcript was read for the last time in the writing of a case study. The case studies are presented in the next chapter. Each case study is a *descriptive* reflection of the participants' experiences, that is, they have been written without any phenomenological interpretation. Therefore I bracketed by own experiences and knowledge in the writing up of the case studies and did not import any external frameworks and interpretations. The case studies were written to provide a clearer version of the participants' experiences than the transcripts and to better organise the data to be resented in this research. This also allowed the case studies to be sent to interview participants along with the transcripts validation.

The case studies and the matrix were the basis for interpretive phenomenological analysis, in which the experiences of participants are discussed in relation to questionnaire data, theoretical frameworks and other research literature. This process takes places in the discussion chapter.

Questionnaire–Open questions

The participants' responses to the open items in the questionnaire were aggregated and counted for each question in the master Excel spreadsheet. They were then copied into a Microsoft Word document and printed. I read the responses to each question in full, and then read the responses again slowly, this time highlighting words and phrases, making notes and generating open codes. On this reading I bracketed by knowledge and preconceptions as much as possible by using open coding and not introducing any information from external frameworks.

At this point I asked a research colleague known to me—who is employed as a Senior Research Assistant with seven years experience and a Masters degree in Research (MRes)—to code the data to the open questions relating to the 'experiences of cybervictims' and 'perceptions of gender involvement in cyberbullying'; two questionnaire items with the opportunity for participants to response in their own words. The purpose of asking my colleague to code and theme these items, as samples, was to check that my coding was correct. On the whole, the codes that I had generated matched those with my colleague, apart from the name of the codes, which were stylistic. For example, I had named a theme 'social networking' (which ultimately became *They are getting at me on social networking sites*) and my colleague had termed a similar code under the theme 'online forums'. A statement written by my colleague to confirm that the coding and themes made were substantially the same is provided in Appendix K.

Once the codes and themes had been validated by my colleague, I then read the responses a third time, along with the codes and themes, this time engaging in interpretative analysis by linking the responses to the research literature, theoretical frameworks, and interview and questionnaire findings. For example, the following comment was provided by a cyberbully:

> *I dunno* (sic), *friends have jokes with one another, whther* (sic) *online or offline. If a joke goes 'too far' then everyone suddenly labels it bullying nowadays, don't know why*. (Boy, 18, White)

Using interpretive lenses, I was able to relate this response to the following literature: an earlier meaning of bullying used by Shakespeare as meaning a close friendship between two people who would tease and joke with one another; the apparent requirement of intent to cause harm to another person; and to the

participants' construction of what bullying is in relation to their own perception of reality. I then wrote up the themes that had emerged from the data and selected quotes from the responses provided by participants to illuminate these themes. These are presented in the next chapter.

3.9 Reliability, Validity and Trustworthiness

Reliability and validity are important standards often used in quantitative research, and trustworthiness is a common standard in qualitative research (Cohen *et al*., 2011). Reliability measures the extent to which the research is repeatable, using the same methods and procedures. This can be achieved by generating consistent findings with the same of different participants at a different time (Cohen *et al*., 2011). Research is also reliable if two or more people interpret data in the same way using the same procedures. This was the case when both my research colleague and I found the same themes in the qualitative data. Since data were collected from 41 colleges it was possible to compare prevalence rates, and although prevalence rates inevitably varied amongst colleges, the variation in prevalence rates was less amongst those colleges with higher sample sizes. However, suggesting linearity based on just the sample size and the prevalence rate is naïve as cyberbullying is a complex behavioural phenomenon and many other factors could affect the prevalence rate for each college.

The procedures used for the research design, collecting data and analysing data were explicit and transparent. This increased the reliability of the research, as it is easier for the study to be repeated. If the research was to be repeated, it should be conducted, including taking place in March, as in this study to ensure consistency. In the discussion chapter, the sample in this research was fairly representative of

the population given the data available to make this assessment. The sample was relatively large and covered a wide geographical area; with 5,690 questionnaire respondents spread over 41 colleges in England.

Validity refers to the extent to which the research actually measured what it set out to measure, and includes the research design, data collection methods and data analysis (Bryman, 2008; Bell, 2010). Two or more methods of data collection can show validity through consistency of findings. The mixed methods approach in this research provided triangulation in order to answer the research questions and was discussed in light of the previous research literature. Internal validity concerns the rigour in the research design and in constructing measurements. The questionnaire was piloted and consideration was given to the measurement of cyberbullying in relation to repetition: participants were asked how many times they were cyberbullied or cyberbullied others so distinction could be drawn between those who were cyberbullied *just* once and those who were cyberbullied more often. This is considered more in the discussion chapter. External validity refers to the degree of generalisability of the research findings to the wider population. Given that the methodology for this research was comprehensive, conducting research in the wider population would be practicable. However, given the context and age group that was the focus of this research, these variables would need to be considered in discussing the findings of other research that used the same methodology as in this research.

As will be shown in the subsequent two chapters (findings and discussion), the responses from participants were 'layered', that is to say that many participants gave similar responses so that codes and themes were generated relatively easily

because of their experiences and perceptions. For example, for the open item in the questionnaire that related to participants' perception of the gender they thought to be involved in cyberbullying more, 72 out of the 211 responses used the term 'bitch' or 'bitchy'. This meant that many participants gave the same or similar responses, which increased the validity to the measures used.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested trustworthiness has four elements: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility relates to the confidence in the believability of the findings, which can be established through triangulation of data collection methods, internal consistency in findings and through participant validation (Shenton, 2004). In this research connections were made between the findings in the questionnaire and those in the interviews. The transcripts and case studies were sent to the interview participants to validate their accuracy of the descriptions they provided. All interviewees confirmed that they were an accurate reflection of their experiences.

Transferability is the extent to which the procedures used to collect and analyse data can be used in other research and if the findings are applicable to other contexts. This can be achieved through providing a detailed methodology, in which data collection and analysis procedures are clear, as was the case in this research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Dependability refers to whether the findings in the research are consistent and if the research could be repeated. This can be achieved through writing the methodology in detail, which has already been shown to be the case in this research. Confirmability relates to the extent to which the research findings are a reflection of participants and not the researcher (Shenton, 2004). The findings in this research were supported by the data and the

procedures used, including bracketing and audit trails to show how the data collection and analysis were carried out and how decisions were made.

Bracketing was a method used to demonstrate validity in the interviews and generating the case studies. This was because I did not discuss with participants my own preconceptions and thought about cyberbullying. Only in the discussion chapter did I link the experiences of the participants with how they related to other literature and external frameworks. Using accurate descriptions from participants increased the credibility and trustworthiness of the data. The process of bracketing (epoché) throughout the interview process ensured that the interviewer did not lead the participant according to the researcher's own beliefs or understanding of cyberbullying. This also allowed participants to speak freely, in their own terms, thereby increasing the validity of the findings. In the analysis, links to the literature in terms of the theoretical frameworks, such as attribution theory and the academic understanding of cyberbullying, were made in order to demonstrate the validity of the findings.

It would have been beneficial to do follow-up interviews with the participants, as the initial interviews did not go as deep as I thought. I could have asked further questions such as '*What do you think cyberbullying is and how do you think it should be defined?'* to gather more detailed information about their experiences before college and explore more about them as a person than their direct involvement with cyberbullying. This was recognised as a limitation in the conclusions chapter.

4 Findings

4.1 Chapter Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present and describe the findings from the questionnaire and interviews. Discussion of the findings takes places in the next chapter, including how the findings relate to other literature and external frameworks. Demographic information is presented first, followed by the closed question data from the questionnaire, organised by research question. The responses to the open questions and the six interview case studies, as well as Sasha's Story, are presented separately from the quantitative data since the content of this qualitative data cannot be easily separated by research question. Specific quotes from cyberbullies and cybervictims are included at appropriate places in the discussion chapter in order to reduce repetition in this chapter.

4.2 Quantitative Data—Questionnaire Findings

The findings from 5,690 questionnaires completed by students aged 16-19 years olds in 41 colleges in England are presented below.

4.3 Research Question 1: How Prevalent is Cyberbullying Amongst Students in Post-16 Education?

Responses to questions relating to cyberbullying others are presented first followed by responses to being cyberbullied.

4.3.1 Cyberbullying Others

Table 25: Participants indicating that they have bullied or cyberbullied others whilst a student

	n	N	%
Q25. Have you cyberbullied anyone since being a college student? (Include incidents inside or outside of college, and to anyone)	93	4,892	1.9
Q.26 Have you physically or verbally bullied anyone since being a college student?	141	4,892	2.9

Just less than two percent of participants reported cyberbullying others whilst being a college student. This compared to a higher rate of around three percent who reported physically/verbally bullying someone as a college student.

Table 26: Number of occasions of cyberbullying others as a college student

Q.42 On how many occasions have you cyberbullied others while being a college student?

	N	%
Once	32	44.4
2 - 3 times	18	25.0
4 - 6 times	4	5.6
7 - 10 times	1	1.4
More than 10 times	17	23.6
Total	72	100.0

The most selected frequency reported for cyberbullying others was *once*. One quarter of cyberbullies reported cyberbullying others *2-3 times*, showing that 7 out of 10 cyberbullies fell within the first two categories. The number of cyberbullies who admitted to cyberbullying others reduced with increased frequency, except for *more than 10 times*, which was selected by almost one quarter of cyberbullies.

4.3.2 Being cyberbullied

Table 27: Participants indicating that they have been victims of bullying or cyberbullying at school or college

	n	N	%
Q.12 Have you been cyberbullied since being a college student?	396	4,993	7.9
Q.13 Have you been physical or verbally been bullied since being a college student?	817	4,891	16.4
Q.14a Did you suffer cyberbullying at secondary school?	1,006	4,862	20.7
Q.14b Did you suffer physical or verbal bullying at secondary school?	2,102	4,899	42.9

Participants were asked if they were bullied or cyberbullied at school and college. Less than one in 10 participants reported being cyberbullied during their time as a college student. In comparison, twice as many reported being a victim of physical/verbal bullying as a college student. Just over one in five participants reported being cyberbullied at secondary school. This figure was double for being a victim of physical/verbal bullying at secondary school. Physical/verbal bullying in both school and college is shown to be twice as prevalent compared to cyberbullying.

Table 28: Number of occasions cybervictims reported being cyberbullied as a college student.

Q.28 On how many occasions have you been cyberbullied while being a college student?

	N	%
Once	145	42.5
2 - 3 times	111	32.6
4 - 6 times	37	10.9
7 - 10 times	9	2.6
More than 10 times	39	11.4
Total	341	100.0

Around four in 10 cybervictims reported being cyberbullied *once*, and was the most chosen frequency. Three in 10 cybervictims reported being cyberbullied *2-3*

times. Together, the two lower frequencies accounted for three quarters of those who were cybervictims. The number of cybervictims decreased with increased frequency, except for an increase for *more than 10 times*, which was selected by just over one in 10 cybervictims.

Table 29: Length of time cybervictims reported their experiences lasting

Q.30 How long did the cyberbullying last?

	N	%
One-off / lasted a day	103	30.7
One day - one week	83	24.8
One week - one month	62	18.5
One month - six months	43	12.8
Six months - one year	15	4.5
More than one year	29	8.7
Total	335	100.0

The most common duration selected by three in 10 cybervictims was a *one-off/lasted day*. This was followed by one quarter of cybervictims who reported their experiences lasting up to a week. The number of cybervictims decreased as the length of time increased, with the exception of those targeted for *more than a year.*

Table 30: Location of where the cyberbullying took place

Q.29 Where did the cyberbullying take place?

	N	%
Outside college only	218	65.3
Inside and outside college	103	30.8
Inside college only	13	3.9
Total	334	100.0

Two-thirds of cybervictims reported being cyberbullied outside of college. Three in 10 reported that the cyberbullying took place inside and outside college. Less than one in 20 cybervictims reported that they were cyberbullied only at college.

Table 31: Indication of who did the cyberbullying

Q32 Who cyberbullied you?

	N	%
Someone at college	99	29.6
Someone outside college	89	26.6
Both inside and outside college	72	21.5
I do not know their identity	75	22.4
Total	335	100.0

Three in 10 cybervictims reported being cyberbullied by someone at college, despite less than five percent reporting being cyberbullied at college. A comparable proportion of cybervictims were cyberbullied by someone outside of college. A fifth reported being cyberbullied by people inside and outside college. Overall, three-quarters of cybervictims could identify their cyberbully in some way. Around one quarter of cybervictims did not know who cyberbullied them.

4.3.3 Impressions about Cyberbullying from the Whole Sample

Table 32: Impression about cyberbullying from the whole sample

	n	N	%
Q.15a Do you think cyberbullying is a problem at your college?	520	4,975	10.5
Q.15b Do you think physical or verbal bullying is a problem at your college?	693	4,973	13.9
Q.15c Do you worry about being a victim of cyberbullying?	702	4,969	14.1
Q.15d Do you know someone who has been cyberbullied?	1,907	4,975	38.3

Percentage column are those who indicated 'Yes' to the above questions

The whole sample responded to these questions regardless of their experience of cyberbullying as a victim or as a bully. One in 10 participants thought cyberbullying was a problem at their college with a slightly higher proportion thinking physical/verbal bullying was a problem. Around one in seven in the sample worried about being a victim of bullying. Nearly four in 10 knew someone who had been cyberbullied.

4.4 Research Question 2: Are there particular groups that engage in or experience cyberbullying disproportionately?

Chi square tests were used to measure associations between participants' demographics and being a cyberbully or a cybervictim. The findings are presented in tables below, followed by brief descriptions. The findings are considered in greater detail in the discussion chapter. There are two tables below each for cyberbullies and cybervictims. The first table shows the demographic characteristics (variables) along with the categories of each variable. For each category, the findings are given for the percentage of each category involved as a cyberbully or cybervictim, and the final column represents the percentage in the whole sample that indicated being involved as a cyberbully or cybervictim.

The second table contains the chi square result for each variable, along with whether the result is statistically significant based on a 5% confidence level (p=0.05). Any categories found to be disproportionately involved (based on comparing the actual with expected frequencies of 1.9% for cyberbullying and 7.9% for cybervictims) are displayed in the final column. A summary table that displays data for both cyberbullies and cybervictims is provided in the discussion chapter.

4.4.1 Cyberbullies

Table 33: Summary of frequencies of demographic categories involved in cyberbullying others (% of sample is compared with overall prevalence rate of 1.9%)

Variable	Category	% of cyberbullies	% of sample
Gender	Boys	65.6	2.9
	Girls	34.4	1.1
Age	16	23.7	1.8
	17	46.2	1.9
	18	22.6	1.8
	19	7.5	2.8
College cybervictim	Yes	33.0	9.1
	No	67.0	1.3
Offline victim at college	Yes	37.4	4.5
	No	62.6	1.4
Cybervictim at school	Yes	37.8	1.5
	No	62.2	3.6
Offline victim at school	Yes	57.1	2.5
	No	42.9	1.4
Ethnicity	White British	73.1	1.8
	Asian	9.7	1.4
	White Other	9.7	4.9
	Mixed	1.1	0.7
	Black	1.1	0.9
	Other	5.4	7.9
Physical disability	Yes	2.4	1.8
	No	97.6	1.8
Autism/Asperger's	Yes	5.9	3.6
	No	94.1	1.8
Dyslexia	Yes	21.2	4.2
	No	78.8	1.6
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	78.3	1.7
	Bisexual	8.7	2.6
	Homosexual	6.5	5.6
	Other	6.5	6.1
Financial assistance	Yes	21.7	1.9
	No	78.3	1.9
Criminal activity	Yes	25.0	10.7
	No	75.0	1.5

Table 34: Summary of chi square results, statistical significance and categories disproportionately found to be cyberbullies

Variable	Chi-square	Statistically significant	Category
Gender	X^2 (1, n= 4,891) = 20.59, p<0.001	Yes	Boys
Age	X^2 (3, n=4,982) = 1.14, p=0.767	No	19
College cybervictim	X^2 (1, N = 4,866) = 100.14, p<0.001	Yes	Yes
Offline victim at college	X^2 (1, n=4,864) = 33.14, p<0.001	Yes	Yes
Cybervictim at school	X^2 (1, n=4,740) = 18.00, p<0.001	Yes	No
Offline victim at school	X^2 (1, n=4,819) = 8.044, p=0.005	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity	X^2 (5, n=4,879) = 23.56, p<0.001	Yes	Other
Physical disability	X^2 (1, n= 4651) = 0.00, p=0.670	No	No relationship
Autism/Asperger's	X^2 (1, n= 4,635) = 2.48, p=0.111	No	Yes
Dyslexia	X^2 (1, n=4,666) = 14.72, p=0.001	Yes	Yes
Sexual orientation	X^2 (1, n=4,836) = 19.06, p<0.001	Yes	Bisexual, Homosexual, Other
Financial assistance	X^2 (1, n=4,867) = 0.010, p=0.501	No	No relationship
Criminal activity	X^2 (1, n=4,873) = 94.85, p<0.001	Yes	Yes

Gender: two thirds of cyberbullies were boys. In terms of the whole sample, more boys reported being cyberbullies compared to girls. The chi square result (p<0.001) shows that boys were more likely to be cyberbullies and this relationship was statistically significant.

Age: The highest proportion of cybervictims was amongst those aged 17 years old, accounting for nearly of half of cybervictims. Almost one quarter of cybervictims were aged 16 years olds, with a comparable rate for 18 year olds. The lowest proportion of cybervictims was reported amongst 19 years old, in terms of the whole sample were most likely to report being cyberbullies. Overall, these proportions were consistent with the age demographics of the sample. The chi square result (p=0.767) did not show the relationship between age and being a cyberbully to be statistically significant.

Cybervictim: A third of cyberbullies also reported being a cybervictim, which was higher than expected (9.1% compared to 1.3% who were not cybervictims).

The chi square result ($p<0.001$) shows that cyberbullies were more likely to be cybervictims and this relationship was statistically significant.

Offline Victim at College: Almost four in 10 cyberbullies also reported being a victim of offline bullying as a college student, which was more than expected in terms of the whole sample. The chi square result ($p<0.001$) shows that those who reported being an offline victim at college were more likely to be a cyberbully and that this relationship was statistically significant.

School Cybervictim: Almost four in 10 of those who reported being a cyberbully at college also reported being a cybervictim at school, which was less than expected in terms of the whole sample. The chi square result ($p<0.001$) shows that those who reported being a cybervictim at school were less likely to report being a cyberbully at college and that this relationship was statistically significant.

Offline Victim at School: Over half of those reporting to be a cyberbully at college also reported being an offline victim at school. The chi square result ($p=0.005$) shows that those who reported being an offline victim at school were more likely to report being a cyberbully at college and that this relationship was statistically significant.

Ethnic Origin: Three quarters of cyberbullies were White British and a further one in 10 were each Asian and White Other. One in 20 cyberbullies classed their ethnicity as 'Other', with one cyberbully each from a Mixed background and Black background. The chi square result ($p<0.001$) shows that those from Asian, Black and Mixed backgrounds were less likely to report being a cyberbully, those who were White British were engaged proportionately according to the sample

demographics, and those who reported being White Other or 'Other' were more likely to report being cyberbullies. The relationship between ethnicity and being a cyberbully was statistically significant. The numbers of cyberbullies for ethnicities other than White British are small, meaning caution needs to be taken with the weighting attached to this analysis.

Physical Disability: The proportion of those who reported having a physical disability was in proportion with those who reported being a cyberbully in the sample demographics. Accordingly, the chi square result (p=0.670) did not show a statistically significant relationship between physical disability and being a cyberbully.

Autism/Asperger's Syndrome: A higher than expected proportion of those reporting to have autism/Asperger's reported being cyberbullies (3.6% compared to 1.8% without). The chi square result (p=0.111) shows that there was some relationship between having autism/Asperger's and being a cyberbully, this was not statistically significant.

Dyslexia, or Numeracy/Literacy Problems (DDLN): One in five of those reporting to be a cyberbully also reported having DDLN. This was higher than expected in terms of the whole sample. The chi square result shows that those with DDLN were statistically more likely to be a cyberbully at college and that this relationship was statistically significant.

Sexual Orientation: Four in five cyberbullies reported being heterosexual, with the remainder of cyberbullies split comparably between those who reported being bisexual, homosexual and 'Other' sexual orientations. The values for bisexual,

homosexual and 'Other' sexual orientations were higher than expected in terms of the whole sample. The chi square result ($p<0.001$) shows that those who reported being bisexual, homosexual and have 'Other' sexual orientations were more likely to be cybervictims and that this relationship was statistically significant.

Financial Assistance: A fifth of cyberbullies reported receiving financial assistance, which was in proportion to the sample demographics. The chi square result ($p=0.501$) did not show a statistically significant relationship between receiving financial assistance and being a cyberbully.

Criminal Activity: One quarter of cyberbullies reported being involved in criminal activity, which was higher than expected in terms of the whole sample. The chi square result ($p<0.001$) shows that those who reported being involved in criminal activity were more likely to be cyberbullies and that this relationship was statistically significant.

4.4.2 Cybervictims

Table 35: Summary of frequencies of demographic categories involved in being cyberbullied (% of sample is compared with overall prevalence rate of 7.9%)

Variable	Category	% of cybervictims	% of sample
Gender	Boys	31.6	5.9
	Girls	68.4	9.5
Age	16	22.7	7.1
	17	42.9	7.5
	18	28.0	9.3
	19	6.3	9.7
College cyberbully	Yes	9.1	33.0
	No	90.9	6.3
Offline victim at	Yes	66.7	32.2
College	No	33.3	3.1
Cybervictim at	Yes	77.6	29.4
School	No	22.4	2.2
Offline victim at	Yes	22.5	3.1
School	No	77.5	14.1
Ethnicity	White British	79.5	8.2
	Asian	9.6	6.1
	White Other	4.8	10.0
	Mixed	2.5	7.0
	Black	1.5	5.3
	Other	2.0	12.3
Physical disability	Yes	5.2	16.8
	No	94.8	7.5
Autism/Asperger's	Yes	6.3	15.9
	No	93.7	7.5
Dyslexia	Yes	17.8	15.0
	No	82.2	7.2
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	75.7	6.8
	Bisexual	15.9	19.8
	Homosexual	4.6	15.9
	Other	3.8	14.9
Financial assistance	Yes	26.5	9.8
	No	73.5	7.4
Criminal activity	Yes	8.7	7.6
	No	91.3	15.2

Table 36: Summary of chi square results, statistical significance and categories disproportionately found to be cybervictims

Variable	Chi-square	Statistically significant	Category
Gender	X^2 (1, n= 4,986) = 21.18, p<0.001	Yes	Girls
Age	X^2 (1, n=4,988) = 6.00, p=0.112	No	18, 19
College cyberbully	X^2 (1, n= 4,866) = 100.41, p<0.001	Yes	Yes
Offline victim at college	X^2 (1, n= 4,978) = 791.13, p<0.001	Yes	Yes
Cybervictim at school	X^2 (1, n= 4,848) = 813.58, p<0.001	Yes	Yes
Offline victim at school	X^2 (1, n= 4,927) = 204.14, p<0.001	Yes	No
Ethnicity	X^2 (5, n= 4,974) = 7.39, p=0.193	No	White, White Other, Other
Physical disability	X^2 (1, n= 4,742) = 13.35, p<0.001	Yes	Yes
Autism/Asperger's	X^2 (1, n=4,726) = 13.98, p<0.001	Yes	Yes
Dyslexia	X^2 (1, n=4,762) = 33.84, p<0.001	Yes	Yes
Sexual orientation	X^2 (3, n=4,931) = 84.92, p<0.001	Yes	Bisexual, Homosexual, Other
Financial assistance	X^2 (1, n=4960) = 6.53, p=0.011	Yes	Yes
Criminal activity	X^2 (1, n=4,970) = 17.27, p<0.001	Yes	No

Gender: Seven out of 10 cybervictims were girls. In term of the whole sample, more girls reported being cybervictims compared to boys. The chi square result (p<0.001) shows that girls were more likely to be a cybervictim and this relationship was statistically significant.

Age: The highest proportion of cybervictims was amongst those aged 17 years old and accounted for four in 10 cybervictims. Those aged 18 years old were next, accounting for nearly three in 10 cybervictims followed by 16 year olds who made up just over two in 10 cybervictims. The lowest proportion of cybervictims was reported amongst 19 year olds, accounting for just over one in 20 reported cases. These proportions were roughly consistent with the age demographics of the sample. In terms of the whole sample, 16 year olds and 17 year olds were less likely to report being cybervictims compared to 18 year olds and 19 year olds. The

chi square result ($p=0.112$) did not show the relationship between age and being a cybervictim to be statistically significant.

College Cyberbully: Nearly one in 10 students who reported being a cybervictim also reported to cyberbullying others, which accounted for one third of all cyberbullies. This result was higher than what was expected and shows that those who reported being a cyberbully at college were more likely to be a cybervictim at college. The chi square result ($p<0.001$) shows that cybervictims were more likely to be cyberbullies and this relationship was statistically significant.

Offline Victim at College: Two thirds of cybervictims also reported being a victim of offline bullying as a college student. These cybervictims accounted for a third of offline victims at college and was more than expected in terms of the whole sample. The chi square result ($p<0.001$) shows that those who are an offline victim at college are more likely to be a cybervictim at college and that this relationship was statistically significant.

School Cybervictim: Three quarters of those that reported being a cybervictim at college also reported being a cybervictim at school. The chi square result ($p<0.001$) shows that those who were cyberbullied at school were more likely to be cyberbullied at college and that this relationship was statistically significant.

Offline Victim at School: Almost one quarter of college cybervictims reported being a victim of offline bullying at school, therefore the majority of cybervictims were not bullied at school. The chi square results ($p<0.01$) shows that those who were not bullied at school were more likely to report being a cybervictim at school and that this relationship was statistically significant.

Ethnic Origin: Four out of five cybervictims were White British and one in 10 were Asian. Those reporting to be White Other, Mixed, Black, and 'Other' accounted for the remaining 10 percent of cybervictims. A higher rate than expected was reported for White, White Other or 'Other'. The chi square result ($p=0.193$) did not show the relationship between ethnic origin and being a cybervictim to be statistically significant.

Physical Disability: A higher than expected proportion of those reporting to have a physical disability reported being cybervictims (16.8% compared to 7.5% without a physical disability). The chi square result ($p<0.001$) shows those with a physical disability were more likely to be cyberbullied at college and that this relationship was statistically significant.

Autism/Asperger's: A higher than expected proportion of those reporting to have autism/Asperger's reported being cybervictims (15.9% compared to 7.5% without autism/Asperger's). The chi square result ($p<0.001$) shows that those with autism/Asperger' syndrome were more likely to report being a cybervictim and that this relationship was statistically significant.

Dyslexia or Literacy/Numeracy Problems (DDLN): One in five of those reporting to be a cybervictim had DDLN. This was higher than expected since only one in ten questionnaire participants indicated they had DDLN. The chi square result ($p=0.001$) shows that those with DDLN were more likely to be a cybervictim and that this relationship was statistically significant.

Sexual Orientation: Three quarters of cybervictims reported to be heterosexual. This was lower than expected and accounted for 6.8% of the whole sample. The

percentage of cybervictims was higher than expected for those who reported being bisexual, homosexual or 'Other' sexual orientations (accounting for between 15 – 20% of the whole sample). The chi square result ($p<0.001$) shows that those who reported being bisexual, homosexual and have 'Other' sexual orientations were more likely to be cybervictims and that this relationship was statistically significant.

Financial Assistance: One quarter of cybervictims reported receiving financial assistance. This was more than what was expected since only a fifth of participants in the sample demographics reported receiving financial assistance. The chi square result ($p=0.011$) shows that those who reported receiving financial assistance were more likely to be cybervictims and this relationship was statistically significant.

Criminal Activity: Less than one in 10 cybervictims reported being involved in criminal activity, which was lower than expected in terms of the whole sample (7.6% compared to 15.2% who reported not being engaged in criminal activity). The chi square result ($p<0.001$) shows that those who reported being involved in criminal activity were less likely to be cybervictims and that this relationship was statistically significant.

4.4.3 Further Results Relating to Gender

Additional questions were asked in relation to gender. The open and closed findings are presented below.

Table 37: Cybervictims' report of the gender(s) of their cyberbullies

Q33. Were you cyberbullied by…?

	N	%
All girls	73	21.9
Mostly girls and some boys	54	16.2
Boys and girls equally	43	12.9
Mostly boys and some girls	27	8.1
All boys	65	19.5
I do not know	71	21.3
Total	333	100.0

A comparable amount of cybervictims reported being cyberbullied by 'all girls' and 'all boys', account for one in five cybervictims each. Cybervictims who reported being cyberbullied by both boys and girls were targeted more by girls than boys compared to more boys than girls. Just over one in 10 reported being cyberbullied by equal and amounts of genders. A fifth of cybervictims did not know the gender of those who cyberbullied them, illustrating the anonymity of cyberbullying.

Perception of Involvement of Gender as a Cybervictim

Table 38: Sample perception of gender more likely to be a cybervictim

Q17a. Which gender do you think is involved in cyberbullying more as victims?

	N	%
Neither/equals amounts	3,298	66.5
Girls	1,513	30.5
Boys	144	2.9
Total	4,960	100.0

Two thirds of the sample reported perceiving that neither boys nor girls were involved in being a cybervictim more or less than the other. Where a specific gender was selected, the vast majority indicated girls were more involved as cybervictims.

Perception of Involvement of Gender as a Cyberbully

Table 39: Sample perception of gender more likely to be a cyberbully

Q17a. Which gender do you think is involved in cyberbullying more as bullies?

	N	%
Neither/equals amounts	3317	67.3
Girls	1158	23.5
Boys	453	9.2
Total	4,929	100.0

Two thirds of the sample reported perceiving that neither boys nor girls were involved in being a cyberbully more or less than the other. Where a specific gender was selected, the majority indicated girls were more involved as cybervictims. This is the same relationship as with cyberbullies, with more of the minority perceiving boys to be involved as cyberbullies than as cybervictims.

Open Question about Perception of Gender and Cyberbullying

Boys More than Girls (29 participants provided comments)

The most prevalent comment as to why boys were thought to be more involved in cyberbullying as cyberbullies was because **boys are more aggressive**. Participants also believed this because they had been witness boys cyberbullying or had been cyberbullied by boys. Some participants referred to boys being jealous of other boys because of their abilities and their popularity with girls.

There were no comments identified by participants that related to boys being involved as cybervictims more than girls.

Girls More than Boys (211 participants provided comments)

As cyberbullies:

The most prevalent theme from the responses was that **girls are bitches/bitchy**, which was evident in 72 of the responses. Other themes that emerged were:

- Girls hide behind computer screens rather than confronting people face-to-face / like to do things behind people's backs, whereas boys are more physical and say things to people's faces (23 responses)
- Girls are jealous of other girls, including their looks, so they cyberbully them (22 responses)
- Witnessed girls cyberbullying more than boys (12 responses)
- Girls like to gossip (11 responses)
- Girls are catty and play on each other's insecurities (7 responses)
- Girls are sly and two-faced (5 responses)
- Girls spend more time online (5 responses)

As cybervictims:

The most prevalent theme from the responses was that **girls are more vulnerable/easier to be target because they put photos of themselves online that attract comments on their looks and physical appearance**, which was evident from 15 of the comments. Other themes that emerged were:

- Girls are more sensitive so see themselves as being cybervictims (8 responses)

- Spend more time online compared to boys (5 responses)
- Boys are more laid lack than girls so do not bother cyberbullying (5 responses)

Neither Gender (13 participants provided comments)

The main themes from the comments provided were that **boys and girls are as bad as each other** and **experience of being cyberbullied by both**. One participant wrote:

> *I don't believe cyberbullying is gender specific at all and by defining it that way we eliminate the gender who we assume don't get involved and marginalise them* (Girl, 17, White British)

The findings to these open responses are used to develop discussion in the next chapter.

4.5 Research Question 3: What Reasons do Students in Colleges Give for Cyberbullying Others and for Being Cyberbullied?

The tables below show the findings for the questionnaire items relating to the reasons why students engaged in cyberbullying others and why students were cyberbullied. A brief outline is provided below each table with discussion in the next chapter.

4.5.1 Reasons Given for Cyberbullying Others

Table 40: Features of the victim as reasons for carrying out cyberbullying behaviour

Q.46 Which of the following features as reasons for why you cyberbullied someone?

	N	%
Intelligence / ability	26	40.0
Friendship groups	24	36.9
Physical appearance	19	29.2
Sexual orientation	15	23.1
Family	14	21.5
Religion	13	20.0
Ethnicity	13	20.0
Physical disability	12	18.5
Gender	12	18.5
Learning disability	9	13.8

Number of cyberbullies responded to this question = 65

The table above shows that cyberbullies selected a variety of reasons for why they cyberbullied their victim, none of which were selected by the majority of cyberbullies. The most commonly reported reasons were their victim's intelligence/ability, selected by four in 10 cyberbullies, and the victim's friendship groups, selected by over a third of cyberbullies. Discriminatory forms of cyberbullying were evident with the remaining reasons, such as sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, disability and gender.

Table 41: Reasons given for cyberbullying others

Q.45 What reasons did you have for cyberbullying?

	N	%
Anger	36	50.0
Fun	30	41.7
Revenge	28	38.9
Boredom	26	36.1
Provocation	21	29.2
Other	19	26.4
Jealousy	13	18.1
Power/status/popularity	13	18.1
Friends/others were doing it	10	13.9
Do not know the reason	9	12.5

Insecurity	8	11.1
To fit in	8	11.1
The person was different	7	9.7
No one would know it was me	7	9.7
Upbringing/bad parenting/bad childhood	4	5.6

Number of cyberbullies responded to this question = 72, N=239

The table above shows that cyberbullies reported a variety of different reasons for cyberbullying their victim. The most common reason given was because of 'anger', selected by half of cyberbullies. Four in 10 cyberbullies selected 'fun' as the reasons for cyberbullying, with comparable rates for revenge and boredom. Three in 10 cyberbullies reported provocation being the reasons for their behaviour. The remaining reasons show the assortment of internal and external attributions given for cyberbullying, which are discussed in the next chapter. Around one in 10 cyberbullies did not know the reasons why they engaged in cyberbullying. Those that selected 'Other' included in the following responses:

I was lonely. (Girl, 17, White Other, Traveller or Roma Gypsy)

just a joke on the internet. (Boys, 17, White British)

because they deserved it. (Boys, 17, White British)

FELT LIKE IT. (Girl, 17, Asian – Bangladeshi, original emphasis)

Cus (sic) it was funny (Girl, 18, White British)

cuz (sic) *he pissed me off*. (Boys, 16, White British)

to stop them bullying another person. (Boys, 18, White British)

Just did because I can. (Girl, 17, White British)

to know what they had against me. (Girl, 18, Asian – Pakistani)

4.5.2 Reasons Given for Being Cyberbullied

Table 42: Reasons given by cybervictims for being cyberbullied

Q.31 Did any of the following have anything to do with the cyberbullying you experienced?

	n	N	%
Physical appearance	217	327	66.4
Your friendship groups	175	328	53.4
Intelligence / ability	112	322	34.8
Your family	89	322	27.6
Sexual orientation	66	325	20.3
Gender	44	320	13.8
Religion	40	324	12.3
Ethnicity	36	323	11.1
Learning disability	27	324	8.3
Physical disability	18	324	5.6

Total number of reasons selected = 824 by an average of 324 cybervictims

The table above shows that victims selected a variety of reasons for why they were cyberbullied. The most commonly reported reasons were their physical appearance, selected by two thirds of cybervictims, and their friendship groups, selected by over half of cybervictims. A third of cybervictims reported that their intelligence/ability was the reason for being cyberbullied, one quarter reporting it was connected to their family and a fifth because of their sexual orientation. Many of the reasons selected are very personal aspects of life, which they have no direct control over, for example their looks, sexual orientation, gender and ethnicity.

4.6 Research Question 4: What are the consequences of cyberbullying on feelings, learning and social integration for cyberbullies and cybervictims?

Questionnaire findings relating to the consequences of being a cybervictim are considered first followed by the findings relating to cyberbullies.

4.6.1 Cybervictims

Table 43: Negative impacts reported by victims following their experiences of being cyberbullied

Q.39 Please indicate whether the following were adversely affected by your experience(s) or cyberbullying

	N	%

Feelings	226	70.6
Sleeping patterns	153	47.8
Learning / academic performance	137	42.8
Ability to develop relationships offline	136	42.5
Diet / eating habits	133	41.6
Ability to develop relationships online	106	33.1
Attendance to lessons	95	29.7

The most commonly reported negative effect reported by the majority of cybervictims was on their feelings. Almost half of cybervictims reported that their sleeping patterns had been affected by their experiences. Comparable rates of around for in 10 cybervictims reported a negative affect on their learning/academic performance, developing relationships online, and on their diet/eating habits. A third of cybervictims reported problems with developing relationships online, and three in 10 cybervictims reported a negative affect on their attendance to lessons.

Table 44: Negative feelings victims reported through being cyberbullied

Q.36 What feelings did you experience when you were cyberbullied?

	N	%
Angry	206	64.0
Hurt	187	58.1
Sad	174	54.0
Depressed	144	44.7
Embarrassed	123	38.2
Anxious	119	37.0
Difficulty concentrating	105	32.6
Isolated	97	30.1
Self-blame	97	30.1
Did not want to go to college	92	28.6
Afraid	85	26.4
Suicidal	82	25.5
Did not bother me at all	72	22.4

Number of cyberbullies responded to this question = 322, total number of selections =1,583

The table above shows a variety of negative feelings reported by cybervictims after being cyberbullied. Two thirds of cybervictims reported feeling angry, with over half of cybervictims feeling hurt and sad. Almost half of the cybervictims felt depressed, whilst one-quarter felt suicidal. One in five cybervictims reported that what happened did not bother them at all. Cybervictim who selected 'Other' included the following responses:

I wanted to kill myself. (Girl, 16, White British)

genuinely didn't care (Boys, 17, White British)

As if cerbullying (sic) *was relentless* (Girl, 17, White)

trapped. (Girl, 16, White British)

Scared. (Girl, 16, White British)

Table 45: Impact of cybervictims' overall mental wellbeing/health

Q.37 What impact did being cyberbullied have on your overall mental wellbeing / health?

	N	%
No impact at all	91	27.5
A little impact	112	33.8
Moderate impact	82	24.8
Very serious impact	46	13.9
Total	331	100.0

Just over one quarter of cybervictims reported that being cyberbullied had no impact at all on their overall mental health/wellbeing. One-third of cybervictims reported a little impact, whereas one-quarter indicated a moderate impact (24.8%) to their mental health/wellbeing. The smallest proportion reported that being cyberbullied had a very serious impact on their mental health wellbeing.

Table 46: Cybervictims' use of technology after being cyberbullied

Q.38 Which statement best describes your use of communications technology after you were cyberbullied?

	N	%
Use technology more	50	15.0

Use technology the same	228	68.5
Use technology less	55	16.5
Total	333	100.0

The majority of cybervictims did not change the amount they used technology since being cyberbullied. Comparable amount of cybervictims reported either using technology more or less since being cyberbullies.

4.6.2 Cyberbullies

Table 47: Cyberbullying reporting feeling remorse after cyberbullying someone

Q.44 Did you feel any remorse (regret) after cyberbullying someone?

	N	%
Yes	24	33.0
No	48	67.0
Total	72	100.0

The majority of cyberbullies reported not feeling any remorse after cyberbullying someone.

4.7 Qualitative Data—Open Questions and Case Studies

Considered below are the responses to the open items in the questionnaire and the interview case studies.

4.7.1 Cybervictims' Experiences—Open Question Findings

Out of the 396 participants that reported being a cybervictim, 55% (n=216) provided details of their experiences in response to the open question asking them to do so. There was no further focus or instructions given for cybervictims to frame their response, which meant they were free to respond in their way and according to the own experience. The aim was to describe cybervictims' experiences of cyberbullying, and this is done through aggregation of responses and quotes, where appropriate. The data were coded and a number of themes were identified. The data below are descriptions of the findings, which are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Platform / location: In their descriptions, some cybervictims referred to where the cyberbullying happened. The most common references were to social networking sites such as Facebook (n=25), Twitter (n=14) and Ask.FM (n=12), with fewer than 10 cybervictim each referring to YouTube and Tumblr. Some cybervictims referred to messaging services such as WhatsApp or Snapchat, and others to general text messages. Where else mentioned, cybervictims referred to their experiences happening 'online'. A total of 18 cybervictims referred to being cyberbullied Ask.FM and Tumblr by people who were anonymous.

Reference was made by some cybervictims to receiving 'Inbox Messages' (a feature on Facebook that allows users to send messages to an individual or add

other users to a group in order to send a group message), and 'tweets' (short messages that are public) being sent about them to other users on Twitter. Where girl cybervictims made reference to being targeted by more than one person, this was in most cases by groups of girls who encouraged others to send horrible messages to the victim via Facebook or Twitter.

Five cybervictims mentioned how they were verbally or physically bullied offline first, which then transferred online as well.

Content and Nature: Many cybervictims referred to unflattering photos of them, being uploaded on Facebook, in many cases without their permission, and then comments were made on the photos and shared with other people. The comments made where about cybervictims' looks and personal appearance and were called names such as fat or ugly (n=23). Cybervictims reported receiving text messages, 'tweets' or Facebook posts about their weight or their looks. In other messages that were received, the content was abusive or threatening (n=12). In seven separate cases, cybervictims cited that they were told to kill themselves. Some cybervictims mentioned their sexual orientation as being the focus of the cyberbullying, and in one of these cases the cybervictim was a heterosexual boy being targeted by a boy who was gay.

The language that cybervictims used in their descriptions varied according to how they perceived their experience of cyberbullying, such as 'name calling' (n=13), 'threatening text/message' (n=12), 'arguing' (n=8) and 'insulting message' (n=7). These show the variety of terms that cybervictims attached in determining and constructing their experience as cyberbullying. Other comments cybervictims made included 'hateful', 'hurtful', 'nasty', 'offensive', 'mean', 'harsh' comments,

that mainly referred to content received in text messages, Facebook posts or comments left on photos uploaded on Facebook.

Some cybervictims explained that the content was supposed to be funny or 'for bants' (banter / joke) got out of hand and turned in to cyberbullying when a nasty or hurtful comment was made.

Relationship breakdown: In total, 19 cybervictims referred to being cyberbullied by others outside their relationship. In some of these cases, jealousy was cited as the reason for being cyberbullied and other people trying to break up the relationship. Some cybervictims were targeted by their ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend because they were upset with breaking up, or were targeted by the friends of their ex-partner. For example, one girl cybervictim was targeted by her ex-boyfriend and his girl friends because she had cheated on him.

Some cybervictims reported arguing or falling with their boyfriend or girlfriend and being sent horrible and nasty messages. In come cases, the relationship remained intact or they got back together. In other cases, where the relationship had ended, boy cybervictims were harassed or abused by their ex-girlfriend (in most cases it was this way around) because they were upset with the relationship ending. In one case, a boy cybervictim had private photos and personal details uploaded to Facebook by his ex-girlfriend who was angry with him over them breaking up. In some cases, girl cybervictims were harassed and abused by their ex-boyfriends who posted messages on Facebook and via text messages.

Friendships: Seventeen cybervictims referred to their experience involving fallouts, disagreements or arguments with friends or people who they thought

were their friends. Some cybervictims wrote about people outside their friendship circles trying to mess things up between them, as they were jealous. Reference was made to friends or so-called friends turning against them and sending nasty or horrible text messages, 'tweets' or messages on Facebook. In some cases, their 'friends' encouraged others to get involved in the cyberbullying, by also sending hurtful messages. In many of these cases, what started off as a joke (or 'bants' or 'banter' as it is also known) between friends would go too far and become upsetting.

Consequences / Reactions: The most common feeling that cybervictims mentioned was feeling 'upset'. Those who were cyberbullied by someone who was anonymous felt powerless because they did not know who the cyberbully was. In a few cases, cybervictims reported self-harming, feeling suicidal, embarrassed and depressed. Other cybervictims mentioned that they confronted the person bullying them either verbally or online, or retaliated to stop them bullying them further (n=7). Three cybervictims explained how they were cyberbullied because they had cyberbullied someone else, who had retaliated against them.

4.7.2 Details of Cyberbullies' Behaviours—Open Question Findings

Out of the 93 participants that reported being a cyberbully, 49 (53%) provided details of their cyberbullying behaviour. The responses were coded and the following themes were identified from the descriptions cyberbullies provided. Although this open question did not specifically ask cybervictims to explain the reasons why they cyberbullied others, many of the comments included reference

to a reason being made. The reasons for cyberbullying others described in these accounts fell into two main categories:

Retaliation: Eight cyberbullies mentioned retaliation as their reason for their cyberbullying behaviour, including confronting the person targeting them online and cyberbullying them, and name-calling as part of an argument where someone had called them names first. Three cyberbullies revealed that they cyberbullied a certain person because that person had cyberbullied someone else and they deserved to be cyberbullied themselves. A further three cyberbullies stated that they would not have cyberbullied someone if they had not been provoked by being cyberbullied themselves.

Fitting in: Some girl cyberbullies stated that they cyberbullied others as a way of fitting in with popular people at college at the expense of their victim and to amuse themselves. They mentioned targeting the cybervictim because they were different and were having a laugh with their friends.

Other themes emerging from the descriptions that cyberbullies provided were:

Platform / Location: The most cited locations by cyberbullies for cyberbullying others was Twitter (n=6) and Facebook (n=5). Also mentioned was Ask.FM and YouTube. Where mentioned, the nature of most of the cyberbullying on these platforms was comments on their victim's photos or videos that they had either uploaded themselves or uploaded by the victim.

Nature/Construct of Cyberbullying: The language that cyberbullies used in their descriptions of what they did was varied and provided an insight into their perception of what amounted to cyberbullying. Seven cyberbullies referred to

what they did as a ‘joke’ between friends that was either taken seriously by the other person or got out of hand. They did not intend to cause harm, but were ‘just having a laugh’. Other cyberbullies did not mention their behaviour as being a joke, but instead described the content they sent as ‘nasty’ or ‘slagging off’ their victim.

4.8 Case Studies

A descriptive phenomenological process, outlined in the methodology chapter, was used to construct case studies, presented below, from the transcripts of the 6 cybervictims who were interviewed about their experiences of cyberbullying. In addition, ‘Sasha’s Story’ is also presented below.

Lucy

My name is Lucy. I am 17 years old and was I born in Germany. I moved to the UK before starting school and I am now studying for my AS levels at college and would like to be a solicitor when I am older.

I was a victim of cyberbullying for the first four years of secondary school and for the first couple of months at college. I was targeted continuously, mostly every other day, sometimes every day. I was cyberbullied because I was from another country. While at secondary school, someone on Facebook posted a message calling me ‘Hitler’s daughter’, and my best friend posted images of me online which she compared me to animals. I was called racist names regularly at school.

At college, I received anonymous comments on Ask.FM about my relationship with my boyfriend, say that I was not good enough to be with him and that he should leave me. I closed down my Ask.FM account twice because of the hurtful

and inappropriate comments made about me. One another occasion, my boyfriend's ex girlfriend commented on the intimacy of our relationship. I knew the identities of the people on Facebook who were cyberbullying me, but I didn't *know* them really. Some of them were quite close friends and some others were friends of my boyfriend. I was cyberbullied by boys and girls, but my mainly one girl, who was the ex girlfriend of my boyfriend. But when it happened on Ask.FM I did not know who they were because they were anonymous.

I tried to ignore what happened but I couldn't and I become very upset. I did not confront her or retaliate because I am not that kind of person. It came to the point were I thought 'Should I even be here' and I started to read online about people committing suicide. I spoke to my parents about the cyberbullying after suffering panic attacks and collapsing. I had to go to the doctors because of the way I was feeling. I still feel upset by what happened and I have had trouble sleeping since I started college. I can't communicate with other people properly anymore because I feel paranoid because people I was close to I feel like I can't trust anymore. I feel out of place and feel like I'm being pushed out of my friendship circle because my boyfriend's ex girlfriend is also in the group. Sometimes I avoid my group of friends and the place where they are when she is there because I don't want any confrontation. I have trouble concentrating in lessons at college because I worry about what she is telling people. I had to miss a day of college because I just couldn't face going in. A lot of what happened died down after a couple of months and she seems to have left me alone now.

I know other people at college who are also being cyberbullied and sexually harassed online. We had a tutorial about cyberbullying at college at the start of the

year but that was about it. I think cyberbullying is difficult to stop because if a website is shut down the cyberbullies will just find another way of doing it.

David

My name is David. I am 18 years old and from Lincoln. I am currently studying on a Level 1 catering and hospitality course at college but I don't know what I want to do after finishing the course. I was a victim of cyberbullying when I was at college last year studying on a different course, but my experiences of being cyberbullied started a few years ago on Facebook when I received messages such as "you should kill yourself", "you're worthless", and "you'll amount to nothing". It didn't start off as serious, just a bit of name calling, but over time it got worse, especially when I choose a different lifestyle. I came out as bisexual and started dressing in Gothic clothes. I was bullied on Facebook about my sexuality, the way I spoke and the way I dressed. When I was cyberbullied at school I told a few teachers and they said that because it was cyberbullying they couldn't do anything about it. Even when I was bullied normally they didn't do anything about it and it came to a point when I had to change schools.

Some of the people who cyberbullied me I thought were my friends, who were mostly boys, and they picked on me because I wore make-up. I removed the people who were cyberbullying me from Facebook, but other people targeted me anonymously. I received some death threats, which I reported to the police. On one occasion, I was in the city centre and a group of youths started to push me around. They punched me and threw a bottle of Coke over me because of the way I dressed. Now I don't go to certain areas in Lincoln, or don't go to them alone at least, because I am scared that the people who have bullied me will be there and

they might have a go at me for the way I dress. Sometimes I go out in trackies or normal styles of clothing just so I don't stand out.

I don't feel confident in myself anymore and I have a lot of trust issues now, which affects me making new friends easily. Now I study people first because I become friends with them because now I am wary of people and don't trust them. I isolate myself from people now, which makes me feel lonely. At college, I prefer to work on my own rather than in a group because of my lack of confidence. I know my college work has suffered because of this because working in a team is a large part of the courses I have been doing. On my course last year I achieved a Pass grade even though my target grade was a Merit. I know I would have done better if I weren't cyberbullied. Sometimes I felt like I didn't want to be at college because of being cyberbullied.

I am not sure how many times I have been cyberbullied because it has been going on for so long. I've suffered from depression and I have cut one of my wrists a few times. At one point it got too much and I wanted to end it all. My mental attitude towards myself has changed. I don't feel useful and don't do much anymore. People see me as lazy but I just don't want to put myself in a position where I am targeted again because I don't trust people not to hurt me, whether that's online or offline. I avoid people more now and if I receive a message from someone saying horrible things I just delete it and block the person as a way of getting away from it.

I'm not sure about other people's experiences of cyberbullying at college because I can't see what is happening to them online. Then again, I don't see much physical bullying at college because people would see that more so perhaps do it

less. I mostly witness verbal bullying at college. I remember covering cyberbullying in a tutorial when I first started college, but I can't really remember that far back. I don't think anything can stop cyberbullying from happening. It's one of those things that can't be stopped because of all the social media and different technology that is around. So unless things go back to pen and paper, things won't change.

Sarah

My name is Sarah. I am 17 years old and studying A-levels at college. I want to be a volcanologist when I am older. I wasn't a victim of bullying or cyberbullying at college, but I was a victim of cyberbullying at secondary school. Two girls who were in the year above me at primary school contacted me on MSN messenger. They had gone to a different secondary school to me but they just started to send nasty and abusive messages to me online. I didn't understand it because we were all friends at primary school. I didn't do anything to them. All of a sudden they started sending me messages that were very personal about my long hair and my big house with a swimming pool and my appearance. They thought I thought myself as amazing and special but I don't. I don't know why they did it. I'm just me and where I live is where I live. It made me feel incredibly rubbish at the time. I cried to my Mom and Dad about it. It shocked me because they were being nasty to me for the fun of it. They were sending me messages nearly every day for about two months.

I told my Mom and she told me to delete them from my contact list and block them from getting in touch. The messages stopped because they could not contact me. A couple of months later I saw them out shopping and they were nice to me,

but I think that was because one of their Mom's was with them. I have them as friends on Facebook now but I don't talk to them because I don't have anything to say to them and I wanted to distance myself from their bad energy. We're only friends on Facebook because they sent a friend request and I accepted it without really taking any notice. One of them now is in a wheelchair and when I knew her at about she had a problem with the way she wrote. I'm not sure whether her disability had anything to do with them targeting me, but they both found it hilarious at the time and they did it for the fun of it.

When I was in Year 11 people started to pick on me because I was trying really hard for my exams. It upset me more because I was older and I was stressed out because of around 20 exams I was sitting for my GCSE's. I had severe anaemia then as well and it was just something else to deal with. If it had been over the internet I think it would have affected me in the same way. But I've always been a driven person and enjoy learning, so I don't think it affected how I did in my exams.

I've used my experiences to my advantage because now I am mainly a stronger person at college because of being a victim and it showed me how people can be. I would never wish being bullied or cyberbullied on anyone, but I do feel stronger and now I think about how I deal with people and how I treat them. If I thought that what I might say would offend someone I won't say it because I wouldn't want to be the one that made someone feel like I did. I suppose you only know how it feels when you go through it yourself. Now if someone says something to me I see it as a joke even if it is really nasty, because I have built up my resilience. It still upsets me, but I make light of it and I try to let it go.

I try to act normally around people in person but over the internet I am a lot more careful of what I say because something innocent can be taken differently to the way that I mean. I have chosen my friends carefully at college and I distance myself from people at college who talk about each other or send horrible messages. I just don't understand why people talk about others for the sake of it.

I don't think cyberbullying is a problem at my college. I think people have a laugh and banter but nothing horrible. People are more grown up in college so they aren't really bothered about your preferences. I think 99% of people at college aren't cyberbullies. But I think in general as long as people have social media and texting it isn't going to go away. The only way it is going to stop is if people didn't have phones and stop saying horrible things because that's what some people do.

Katie

My name is Katie. I am an 18 year old student from Hull. I am studying A-levels and want to either be a singer or a crime scene investigator when I am older. I have not been a victim at college, but I was bullied and cyberbullied at secondary school. When I started secondary school I was not very confident in my looks and I think the bullies noticed this and used it to their advantage. I remember being bullied on my first day of school and it carried out for around two years. I was put up with name-calling, pointing and giggling. It was relentless and I felt like it was happening every day. I ended up making up stories about myself, and lying just to fit in at school. I was paranoid thinking people in lessons were talking about me and whether they were planning something, so I wasn't really thinking about school work. I did miss some lessons and lied to my Mom about being ill so I

could stay away from school. The only way I could stop getting cyberbullied was not to go online.

The ringleader was a boy from Africa. In an Art lesson, he used scissors to cut my fringe really short and then convinced everyone I did it to myself because I was an attention seeker. That plagued me for a month until my fringe grew back. He also convinced other people to kick me as I was going by on several occasions. I told a lady in the pastoral care office about what had happened but she did not believe me because he had been to see her before me and accused me of being racist.

On another occasion a girl who I was previously friends with become aggressive and said to me at school “Meet me outside school I'm going to beat you up”. I went to the pastoral care office to get help and they contacted my parents who then picked me up from school. When I finally told my parents about all what had been happening they arranged a meeting with school. The African boy’s Mom attended the school for a meeting about him bullying me but she couldn’t speak English and he didn’t translate. He claimed that people were being racist towards him and the school didn’t take it any further.

I had a Facebook account, which I deleted after being cyberbullied. People would send me friend requests and snoop around on my profile page. They would make inappropriate sexual references about my family and me. Other people twisted a lot of status messages I put on Facebook and I felt like I couldn’t control this. Like the school bullying I suffered, the online bullying went on for about two years. The African boy also bullied me on Facebook. Because it was Facebook the only way I could get away from it was by deleting my account.

I found it hard to get away from because this particular boy had power, social status and authority and people would believe him over me and make me feel like an outcast. My address was on Facebook the boy would take people around to show them where I lived. Most of his bullying was verbal rather than on Facebook; he was quite clever like that. Him and around six or seven of his friends, as well as a group of girls drawn in by him bullied me. The girls would comment on my looks and my choice not to wear make-up like they did. I believe it was my lack of confidence that made me a target with him and not wearing make-up that made me a target with the girls. Anything that made me slightly different made me a target. It all knocked my confidence further, especially when he labelled me a lesbian.

When by younger brother and sister joined the school. My brother was bullied by the same African boy because he was a little over weight and short. It didn't do anything for my brother's confidence. My sister is confident and she confronted him and it all stopped. He moved on to other people after that. But he couldn't manage a day passing without making a comment about somebody. Things were a little different for me from Year 9 onwards. I ended up going out with a lad. If you think about a hierarchy he was at the top part and no one messed with me because I was with this lad who was like a safety net and I was part of a new group. I felt my attitude change and the way I carried myself and I felt more protected. I started doing anti-bullying work in Year 11. I put together a PowerPoint presentation and delivered it as part of assemblies to primary school children aged 7 – 9 years old. I still do this now that I am in college because I like to raise awareness of bullying.

Since I left secondary school I haven't touched Facebook. There are people at college that say "I've requested you on Facebook why haven't you accepted?" I just say I don't go on there and when they ask why I tell them about the bullying and they understand. I am more wary and judgmental of people now and I don't make friends very easily. Now I gravitate to people who I get a positive vibe from. I've never been the type of person to have a large group of friends anyway. I feel a lot safer at college and find it a more relaxed and adult atmosphere. I stay at college until 5pm nearly every day to do work. At secondary school, as soon as the bell went I didn't stay one moment longer than I needed to.

What happened to me at school is still a constant reminder at college because a couple of the boys that bullied me at school are at the same college. But in a sad and satisfying way these lads came to college and no one cares what they think. They are finding their own way again and to be fair to them it was probably easier for them to follow the ringleader at school for their own protection. I don't really get upset about what happened to me anymore. In a way, I am happy that it happened to me because it's hard to imagine what people are going through unless it's happened to you. It has help me with my anti-bullying work I am thankful that I was bullied because another person might not have had such a positive outcome in terms of engaging in anti-bullying work and wanting to try and make a difference.

Laura

My name is Laura. I am 17 years old and I am studying for my A-levels in Lancashire. I want to be a midwife when I am older. I was a victim of cyberbullying at secondary school and at college.

My experience of being cyberbullied started at secondary school when people started to call me fat and ugly on Ask.FM. People could see my Facebook profile on Ask.FM because it was linked it. That meant that some of the people cyberbullying could see my pictures on Facebook and write nasty things about me on Ask.FM. I knew one girl who was quiet to my face and wouldn't say anything to me, but she would send messages and texts to me. Once she sent a message on Facebook saying, "We are going to collect our results but Laura isn't coming". Then other girls made comments on her post, such as "There is shit going down" and "There is enough shit on Laura". I was also cyberbullied when I stood up for a friend at school who was targeted because she had depression and greasy hair. I received an anonymous message on Ask.FM saying, "You should both leave our year, none of us like you". At one point I was told to kill myself on Ask.FM and was asked why I hung around with her and I was called ugly because I hung around her because they thought she was a tramp. I don't see why websites like Ask.FM are created because it protects people like cyberbullies because they can be anonymous and that makes them more vicious because can't get caught. I had an idea of who it was, but I couldn't prove it so I didn't confront anyone about it.

I was cyberbullied for around two years, starting in the middle of Year 10 and finishing just after I started college. I think they stopped cyberbullying me soon after I left school because they didn't see me anymore and must have just moved on from me. Other than skipping a couple of days of school, it didn't really affect my education, but it did affect my mental health. I got upset and started to self-harm a little bit but I was doing that before the cyberbullying anyway. I had other stuff going on at the same time and cyberbullying exacerbated it. I don't self-harm anymore. When I came to college everything got better. Now I just get angry

because I didn't do anything to stop the cyberbullying when it was happening. I didn't tell my parents, just some friends. No one still really knows what happened. I thought that I could deal with it and did not want her parents to think differently of me.

I don't think bullying or cyberbullying is a problem at my college. I think when you go to college everyone matures. You are just accepted no matter what your skin colour, gender or sexuality. I think we covered something on cyberbullying in a tutorial in the first week of college, but I can't really remember. I think the removal of anonymous websites will definitely help to stop cyberbullying and teaching kids to be more accepting of people. I remember one boy had a high-pitched voice and people called him gay. He did turn out to be gay but that's not the point. People should be taught not to be discriminatory. If someone is being cyberbullied they should ignore it. If you give people the satisfaction of knowing you get upset, it could make it worse. I know everyone says you should tell an adult but I don't know if that is always the right thing to do because there is nothing that they can do about it. The bullies will only say, "Why have you told people?" It would make things worse.

Angela

My name is Angela. I am 18 years old and from Southampton. I am studying A-levels at college and I want to be a pharmacist when I am older. I was a victim of bullying and cyberbullying in secondary school and suffered a little verbal abuse at college. I was bullied throughout my entire time at secondary school and I was cyberbullied less than the number of times I was verbally bullied. At school my aim was to get as many friends as possible on Facebook so I accepted lots of

friend requests. A fatal error of mine was to upload some photos of me. I'm not the most photogenic of people and at the same time I was getting bullied face-to-face because of my looks.

One of the bullies in particular made an unflattering picture of mine as her profile picture on Facebook. She has thousands of friends so I don't know why she picked on my photo. I reported it to Facebook and eventually she took it down off her profile. She never apologised but then why would she because I am the unpopular one. On another occasion a couple of boys made sarcastic comments on my Facebook page. They wrote "You're so sexy" but it's obvious that I'm not. It's one of their strategies–they knew and I knew that it was sarcastic and bullying but other people wouldn't, which is actually really annoying. I found the girls who were targeting me were a lot more catty and underhanded than boys, but boys grow out of it slower than girls because girls mature quicker. There is always going to be a boy who thinks he is king of the world and target people like me because I'm different from all the popular kids and focus in on that. For me, I got picked on because of my looks and my intelligence. It was horrible and depressing. I didn't help myself really because I gravitated towards popular people.

I heard about other people being bullied on Ask.FM and because I was unpopular I felt I should just steer clear and avoid places like that. I took steps to protect myself and removed people I didn't know from my Facebook. I'm a lot careful now and I don't upload any pictures of me unless I am really happy with the picture. I think that bullies target those who are interesting in some way, like being in a relationship at school or something else that they could latch on to. That

was a gold mine for the bullies because it was something they could try and ruin and just spread rumours about it. Unpopular kids like me just try to keep out of the way of it all.

I'm not certain what counts as bullying or cyberbullying, but I think if someone has a go at something you are already upset about in a face-to-face situation then it has to be bullying and if it's online then it's cyberbullying. You couldn't possibly call someone an ugly cow face-to-face and for it not to be called bullying, so if it's online and somebody called someone else an ugly cow it would still be bullying. There is no difference in my opinion. Also if someone goes back to you and does it again, knowing it is already upsetting you, and if you intentionally hurt someone then that's bullying. But victims don't bully. It's just a fact. They might say something mean, but they don't bully.

Being bullied did affect me because I wasn't anxious before it all started. I remember being upset the first time it happened. It was an indignant sort of upset because I was being bullied at school and I couldn't quite believe that it could follow me home online. I couldn't get away. But I have got over a lot of the bullying now. Before starting college I was shy and awkward and how I have started a part time job I am confident because I talk to the public.

At college a couple of lads targeted me because I didn't have any make-up on and for the way I dressed. I don't have time to put make-up on. It's just annoying. It still happens now, but not that often. I'm in a group of mostly victim friends, but we just shrug it off because we don't consider it to be proper bullying, just them being silly. People at college are a lot more grown up on the whole. What happened at school still affects me because I am nervous about being a victim

again. I remember a PowerPoint presentation on cyberbullying but it was shown in our tutorial slot. No one was really interested in it because we were trying to do our work because our tutor encourages us to use our tutorial slot as an extra study period.

Sasha's Story

Sasha is 17 years old. She self-harms, abuses her mother and is frightened of most situations and people. Yet, at age 5 she was considered to be the kindest child in her class and at age 11 she was the happiest girl in her year group. Sasha was adopted at 21 months, suffering from severe neglect, underdeveloped in all areas and below the lowest percentile in physical growth. Advised by paediatricians, Sasha's parents followed a strict regime of diet, exercise and stimulation. Sasha was happy with other children and liked by the many adults that she met.

In primary school Sasha was a late developer with learning difficulties. This was the start of the torment and bullying that she was to endure for the next 12 years. Teachers labelled Sasha, describing her as 'lazy' and 'not trying'. She became a window watcher; being kind was her way of gaining friends and being liked by teachers. Boys found it easy to verbally and physically abuse Sasha, teachers putting a stop to this after a year of meetings.

Joining secondary school provided the fresh start needed. Sasha loved lessons, joining in with her tutor group activities. Tests and subsequent setting of pupils placed Sasha in the lowest groups with the badly behaved. The impact on her life was dramatic. Lessons were often directed by the weakest teachers, many covered

by supply staff. Classes were noisy, the language 'blue', there were days when Sasha did not speak at all.

Sasha formed a friendship with Nicola, a girl with mild autism. Both struggled with learning. Both found themselves in the 'House' room at breaks and lunchtimes having suffered from verbal and physical bullying. Academic progress was not the priority in school; survival was the main aim of every lesson, every day. The abusive language directed at them was foul, their education changed direction, and their learning now focused on what they could do to survive.

Aged 14, another girl, Amy, entered the friendship. Petty teenage jealousies ensued; Sasha began receiving verbal, physical and cyber abuse from Nicola. A family holiday that Nicola joined ended the friendship when Nicola was physically and verbally abusive towards Sasha.

Sasha joined out of school activities, forming new friends. In Year 10 the bullying in school went in a new direction. A boy, known for his deviant behaviour threatened to sexually assault Sasha. It took a year before action was taken to removing the boy who continued to harass Sasha, and other young people. Sasha's health began to suffer, resulting in 'block headaches' and glandular fever. Absence from school was now more regular than attendance.

Nicola and Amy continued with 'soft bullying'; sending texts saying that Sasha would fail her exams and that she would not have any friends. During preparation for BTEC assessments and GCSE exams, this developed into regular cyber-bullying, threatening to beat up Sasha if she talked to other girls. Sasha became reclusive and scared, only venturing out with her family. A doctor's certificate

was issued advising the school examination office to allow Sasha to take her exams away from the stress of other pupils. The bullying continued; Sasha did not attend the school prom, an event that she had been looking forward to for two years. Nicola and Amy took the bullying one step further, threatening Sasha at home, extorting a game.

Sasha's exam results suffered. Instead of continuing onto the sixth form to start higher-level BTEC programmes, she joined an access course. Amy and Nicola had moved onto college and Sasha felt safe. After three weeks Nicola joined the access course. The bullying intensified with regular texts, physical and verbal abuse. By November, this had escalated to death threats. In December, regular emails added to the texts.

At the start of term two of the access course Nicola was permanently excluded from the school. Nicola began stalking and harassing Sasha. Between February and July there were 38 reported incidences involving Nicola against Sasha, including 19 arrests, 9 police officer assaults by Nicola and 3 court hearings. Death threats came via phone calls, letters, emails to Sasha's parents' work places, stalking outside the family home, and texts. In July, Nicola received a 2-year restraining order, a 5-year suspended sentence, community service, and ordered to pay costs. This was, in part due to Sasha, but more directly due to Nicola abusing and threatening her carers, police officers, and going missing when wearing a tag. The court appearance was recorded in the local press with the heading, 'You will die'.

Sasha has applied to join a residential animal care course in a neighbouring town; her BTEC results should be sufficient to gain entry, although her school report

may be detrimental. Throughout sixth form Sasha has been assessed as reaching 44% of targets set, aimed at 'A' Level students applying to university. Sasha had found it difficult to attend classes, and those she did attend, she was window watching, not participating in discussions or asking questions.

Throughout secondary school, teachers and leaders had not taken responsibility for Sasha, Nicola or Amy. Driven to achieve examination successes and placing Sasha in danger, ignoring her isolation, her fear and absences from lessons, they missed the loss of her smile. The school concerned has a local authority 'Anti-Bullying' certificate displayed in the reception area.

4.8.1 Themes in Victims' Experiences

The coding process of the case studies revealed the themes below, which form part of the discussion of cybervictims' experiences in the next chapter.

I've been targeted in multiple ways in multiple spaces

Each of the victims experienced repetition either in terms of the stage of education or in terms of the type of bullying they endured. The table below shows the mapping of the types of bullying experienced by victims at school and college.

Table 48: Mapping of type of bullying endured in school and college

	Secondary School		College	
	Physical/Verbal	Cyber	Physical/Verbal	Cyber
Lucy		X		X
David	X	X	X	X
Sarah		X		
Katie	X	X		
Laura		X		X
Angela	X	X	X	
Sasha	X	X	X	X

X = Experienced by victim

The table shows that all victims experienced cyberbullying at secondary school. The victims reported repetition in their experiences of bullying/cyberbullying in some way, as follows:

Lucy: experienced cyberbullying almost every day, sometimes every day for the last four years of secondary school and for the first couple of months at college.

David: experienced bullying and cyberbullying at school and at college. He stated he has been targeted too many times to remember because it was happening for so long.

Sarah: was cyberbullied nearly every day for two months while she was at school.

Katie: felt like she was being bullied/cyberbullied everyday since the first day of school for two years. She refers to her experiences as 'relentless'.

Laura: started being cyberbullied in Year 10 and continued to be cyberbullied just after starting college.

Angela: endured bullying and cyberbullying all the way through secondary school.

Sasha: experienced verbal and physical bullying and cyberbullying in school and college for a total of 12 years.

The table also reveals that not all case study participants were *cybervictims* at *college.* Sarah, Katie and Sarah were targeted at school, but their experiences have not been discounted because being targeted can have lasting effects, and this

information is therefore valuable to discuss in terms of the consequences, especially because these victims were target multiple times.

They are getting at me on social networking sites

Victims reported various channels that were used to bully/cyberbully them. In particular, Facebook was most prevalent for those who were cyberbullied. The channels used illustrate how being bullied and cyberbullies penetrated the victims' physical and psychological spaces and how difficult it is to escape being a victim.

> **Lucy:** horrible comments were left on photos uploaded to Facebook and comments on Ask.FM.
>
> **David:** received nasty messages on Facebook. Was punched and called names in the town centre where he lives.
>
> **Sarah:** nasty and abusive messages sent to her on MSN Messenger.
>
> **Katie:** verbal bullying included being called names, physical bullying included being kicked and her fringe cut, and received inappropriate messages on Facebook in response to status posts she made.
>
> **Laura:** Facebook account was linked to Laura's Ask.FM account and people wrote nasty anonymous comments about her photos. Laura also received text messages and messages on Facebook from people she knew.
>
> **Angela:** received comments on photos she had uploaded to Facebook.

Sasha: was called names and hit both at school and college. Received threatening messages and visits at her home. Also received threatening messages online and on the phone.

One victim and many (cyber) bullies–'Friends are Cyberbullies'

Each victim was bullied/cyberbullied by more than one person, showing that repetition can be achieved through being targeted by multiple bullies. In most cases the bullies/cyberbullies included the victims' friends:

Lucy: her best friend posted an image of Lucy comparing her to animals. Some of Lucy's close friends also cyberbullied her, as well as Lucy's boyfriend's ex-girlfriend, and some of his friends. Boys and girls targeted Lucy, but those on Ask.FM were anonymous.

David: some of those that bullied/cyberbullied David were his friends, or at least who he thought were his friends. He did not know some of the people he could identify, for example those who bullied him in the town centre. Other people who bullied David did so anonymously.

Sarah: targeted by two girls who Sarah was a friend to in the year above her at primary school.

Katie: a girl who Katie was previously a friend with wanted to fight Katie after school. Katie was targeted mainly by a boy at her schools, as well as six/seven of his friends and a separate group of girls.

Laura: most of the cyberbullying Laura experienced was done anonymously. Laura received a Facebook message from one girl excluding

her from going to collect exam results with the rest of the group, which other girls joined in by making their own comments.

Angela: a popular girl targeted Angela through Facebook and a couple of boys made comments on her Facebook account.

Sasha: two friends tormented Sasha in school, and one of them continued her campaign of taunts when Sasha started college. A boy in Sasha's school sexually harassed and threatened Sasha.

Pick on me–I'm different

Victims reported being cyberbullied for a variety of different reasons, but all were related to how they were different or perceived to be different.

Lucy: suffered racist bullying because she came from Germany. Her boyfriend's ex-girlfriend also targeted her because of Lucy's relationship with him.

David: was targeted because of his bisexuality, for the way the spoke and for the way he dressed.

Sarah: cyberbullied because of her looks and because her parents had a big house with a swimming pool

Katie: targeted because of her low confidence in her looks and her choice for not wearing make-up. Katie believed that she was targeted for anything that made her slightly different.

Laura: reported being cyberbullied because she was fat and ugly. Laura was also targeted because she protected someone else that was also being bullied.

Angela: cyberbullying related to her looks and intelligence. Believes that cyberbullies target people who have something they can latch on to, for example being in a relationship because them they could spread rumours about it and try and ruin in.

Sasha: targeted because she had learning difficulties and her 'friends' saw her as an easy target.

I'll do something, but I won't confront you or retaliate

Victims often changed how they used technology after being cyberbullied or took other action to reduce the risk of them being bullied or cyberbullied further. None of the victims confronted / retaliated again their bully/cyberbully.

Lucy: twice closed down her Ask.FM account after being cyberbullied. She did not retaliate or confront her cyberbullies because she is not that kind of person.

David: removed from Facebook those he knew were cyberbullying him. If he received a text message or a message online now, he just deleted it and blocks the person. David isolated himself more now and avoids going to the town centre alone because he is scared that those that bullied him will be there. If he goes go out, David feels the need to wear 'normal' clothes so as not to draw attention to him.

Sarah: did not do anything to provoke the cyberbullying she experienced. On her Mom's advice, Sarah used the block and delete functions on MSN to prevent the girls targeting her again.

Katie: deleted her Facebook account and stopped going online to not get cyberbullied. Told her Mom what had happened but after meeting with the school not much changed. She stopped being a victim when she started a relationship with a popular boy at school.

Laura: did not confront anyone after being cyberbullied. Laura did protect another victim of cyberbullying, but made matters worse for Laura because she got cyberbullied more.

Angela: deleted people she did not know from Facebook after being cyberbullied. Angela avoided sites like Ask.FM to reduce risk of being targeted.

Sasha: did not confront her bullies/cyberbullies because she was not confident to do so, but did report it do her parents. Action was eventually taken against perpetrators, culminating in the main offender being convicted.

It changed the way I felt and what I did

Lucy: tried to ignore what happened but got upset. Lucy's experiences led to a panic attack, collapsing at college, and a visit to the doctors. At one point Lucy felt suicidal. She also had trouble sleeping.

David: felt that he needed to dress in 'normal' clothes when in the town centre because of not wanting to attract attention to himself and he was scared that the bullies would target him again. David struggled with his self-confidence, his mental attitude towards himself and other people changed, and he now does not easily trust people. His educational performance was affected because David should have achieved a Merit on his course but only achieved a Pass grade. David isolated himself outside of college, and he preferred to work on his own at college, which did not help as a large part of the courses he enrolled on included team working. David suffered with feelings of depression, he self-harmed, and at one point felt suicidal.

Sarah: being cyberbullied added to Sarah's problems with anaemia and her exam stress because it was something else she had to deal with.

Katie: felt paranoid that her bullies were planning how next to target here and this affected her concentration in lessons. Katie lied to her Mom about being ill to stay about work school. Katie's level of confidence was also negatively affected.

Laura: being cyberbullied made other things going on in her life worse and affected Laura's mental health. Laura harmed herself because of everything that was going on. She feels angry because she did not do anything to stop the cyberbullying from happening.

Angela: knows that being bullied affected her because she did not feel anxious before it started. Angela felt indignantly upset because she could not believe that being bullied could follow her home online.

Sasha: became reclusive and scared, only going out with her family. She is scared of most situations and people. Sasha has suffered from headaches and glandular fever. Sasha's attendance suffered to the extent that she was absent from school more than she attended, which was a contributory factor to her lower than expected exam results. Sasha self-harms and has physically and verbally abused her Mother.

It changed the way I do things now at college

Lucy: feels that she cannot properly communicate with people anymore because she feels paranoid and does not trust people not to hurt her. Lucy feels out of place in her friendship group because one of her cyberbullies in in the same group, and this leads to Lucy avoiding certain people and places at college.

David: has lost his self-confidence and finds he studies people more because he is less trusting. He isolates himself, which makes the team working components of his college course difficult.

Sarah: tries to distance herself from people who talk about each other and sees them as bad energy. Sarah now chooses her friends more carefully. She finds it easier to be normal with people face-to-face but is more careful online because what is written might be misinterpreted. Lucy feels that her experiences of being cyberbullied have made her stronger and she uses this to her advantage in that she thinks more about what she says to people and how she treats them.

Katie: has not accessed Facebook since starting at college. Katie is more judgemental of people and makes friends less easily now. She is reminded by her experiences at school because a couple of her bullies are at the same college but it does not rally upset her anymore. In a way, Katie is happy she was victimised because it spurred her on to develop and deliver anti-bullying resources to younger children and she know appreciates what people who are victimised by bullying/cyberbullying go through because it happened to her.

Angela: is now more careful in terms of uploading pictures to Facebook. Angela still feels nervous because of becoming a victim again. Angela has made friends at college who were also victims of bullying/cyberbullying.

Sasha: has had to change courses at college because of her continued experience of being victimised since she started.

School/college environment and approach to anti-bullying

Lucy: had a tutorial on cyberbullying when she first started college. Knows that other people are cyberbullied at college.

David: told his school about being a victim but they could not do anything because it was cyberbullying, but even with offline bullying they did not do anything, resulting in David moving schools. David witnesses verbal bullying at college. He says that the covered bullying/cyberbullying in a tutorial when he first started college but he cannot really remember it.

Sarah: does not think cyberbullying is a problem at college because the students are more grown up, and believes people have banter with each other rather than being horrible.

Katie: the person in the pastoral care office did not believe Katie when she told them she was being bullied. Katie feels safer in college because it is a more relaxed environment.

Laura: believes people at college are more mature and cyberbullying is less of a problem. Katie remembers covering something about cyberbullying at college in her first week, but cannot remember the details.

Angela: in a tutorial a PowerPoint on cyberbullying was shown but no-one was paying attention because the class is encouraged to use the tutorial period as a time to catch up on work.

Sasha: throughout secondary school the teachers and leaders did not take responsibility for Sasha or her bullies/cyberbullies. They were driven my exam success and missed warning signs, despite them having an anti-bullying certificate in their reception area.

The finding in this presented in this chapter are now discussed, by bringing together the quantitative and qualitative data, by comparing the results to this research with other literature and relating the outcomes with external frameworks.

5 Discussion

5.1 Chapter Introduction

The findings for each of the four research questions are discussed in turn in relation to the wider research literature and by integrating the open and closed data from the questionnaire and the case studies. The experiences of those who were interviewed can be referred to in section 4.8. Various methodological and theoretical points are highlighted throughout this chapter and are carried forward to the conclusions chapter, which follows.

The age group of participants was a significant aspect of this research. Relatively little is known about what role 16-19 year olds in college have in cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied. As is discussed below, the age of participants may be a factor that affects the prevalence rates of cyberbullying; possibly because of increased maturity, but also because as they get older what they *perceive* to be cyberbullying changes. Such differences in perceptions can have a variety of implications for prevalence rates, which could have implications in terms of whether older teenagers report being victims or bullies, as well as for the definition of bullying and cyberbullying according to participants of different ages.

5.2 How prevalent is cyberbullying amongst students in post-16 education?

The prevalence of being cyberbullied is discussed first, followed by the prevalence of cyberbullying others. The perceptions of cyberbullying of the whole sample are considered at the end of this section.

5.2.1 Being Cyberbullied

In total, 7.9% of the sample reported being victims of cyberbullying as college students. This is less than half compared to the 16.4% of the sample who reported being victims of physical/verbal bullying during their time as college students. Comparison of these figures shows that offline bullying was more prevalent than cyberbullying, suggesting that it might be more of an issue in colleges than cyberbullying. At this level of analysis, cyberbullying at school could be seen as more of an issue than at college, since 20.7% of the sample reported being cybervictims at school, which is more than double the prevalence rate of those reporting that they had been cybervictims as college students. The highest prevalence rate of victimisation in this study was 42.9% of participants who reported being victims of physical/verbal bullying at school. This was double the number of cybervictims at school, and nearly six times the number of those reporting that they had been cyberbullied as college students. However, a time frame was not provided for participants' experiences at secondary school. Since a person usually attends secondary school for five years, compared to a shorter time at college, these results cannot be directly compared to each other. In light of these findings, research is needed that considers both bullying and cyberbullying in both schools and colleges so that the connections between them can be made.

It was possible to disaggregate the overall prevalence rate of 7.9% to show the prevalence rate for each of the 41 colleges that participated (see Appendix H). However, college-level analysis of the findings was not intended in this research, either as part of the research design or scope. Instead, the large sample size served to reduce the distortions of the prevalence rates for individual colleges, where either a low number of students replied or where there was a low response rate, or

both. This can be seen by examining the prevalence rates for the colleges, ranging from 0% (based on 5 completed questionnaires and a response rate of 9.4%) to 26.9% (based on 48 completed questionnaires and a response rate of 2%). The average number of completed questionnaires from each college was 142. Institutional-level analysis is important to consider and such analysis should be the focus of future comparative research, which will allow for differences in prevalence rates between colleges to be explored.

Putting the Prevalence Rate into the Context of the Literature and Methodology

The prevalence rate for being cyberbullied in this research, 7.9%, was recognised as being lower than in many studies in the literature review: for example, Hinduja and Patchin (2006) reported a rate of 29%, while the corresponding figures were 23.8% for Mishna *et al*. (2010) and 28% for Cross *et al*. (2012). However, it was greater than in some other studies, such as Ybarra and Mitchell (2004), who reported a prevalence rate of 4%, while West (2012) reported a rate of 6.7%, Vazsonyi *et al*. (2012) reported 7% and Olweus (2012) found a rate of between 3.2% and 5%. However, direct comparison was not possible with any of these findings—or with any other studies considered in the literature review—owing to the different context within which the research had taken place, and to the differences in the research design and methodological framework. Direct comparison could be achieved if more research was carried out in post-16 education contexts using the same methodology. The methodological differences between this study and others in the literature review are now considered in an attempt to explain the differences in the prevalence rates.

The data collection took place throughout March, rather than at any other time of the year: this was intentional and formed part of the research design of the study. March was a good time of year to choose owing to the fact that it enabled students to consider at least 6–7 months of being in their new college context (longer if they were not first-year students), but not so late on in the year as to disrupt preparation for the summer exam period. However, a few colleges declined to participate in the survey, citing that they had too many surveys to complete and other activities that took priority. Realistically, however, it may be impossible to select a time of year where all colleges are willing and able to take part.

In this research, it was clear that participants were answering questions about their experience of being *cybervictims*, in the wording of the questions and the definition of cyberbullying provided in the preface to the questionnaire. This was in contrast to Beran and Li (2007), for example, who asked participants to consider *harassment* against them, despite the researchers' claim of measuring *cyberbullying*. Furthermore, in Tarapdar and Kellett (2011), the researchers measured whether participants had experienced cyberbullying as *either a victim or witness*. Each of these studies reported much higher prevalence rates compared to this research—58% and 38%, respectively.

The sample size of 5,690 questionnaire respondents across 41 colleges was higher than most research considered in the literature review both in terms of the number of participants and the number of participating institutions. In general terms, a larger sample is more likely to represent the population and increase the reliability of research. Likewise, smaller samples from a limited number of institutions, such as those in Smith *et al.* (2006) (92 participants, 22% cybervictims) and Campbell

(2005) (120 participants, 14% cybervictims) can be less representative of the population and yield less reliable findings. Therefore, institutional-level analysis was not a feature of this research. Notably, the prevalence rates in these two studies were higher than in this research.

Studies with larger sample sizes, such as Kowalski (2012), who had 4,531 participants, of whom 10.6% were cybervictims, and Vazsonyi *et al*. (2012), who had 25,142 participants, of whom 7% were cybervictims, had relatively lower prevalence rates, closer to the level in this research, which also had a larger sample. The cybervictim rate of 7% in Vazsonyi *et al*. (2012) is comparable to the 7.9% found in this research: however, the age group considered was different and the participants were from many different countries, meaning that there could be other contributing factors, for example in relation to where participants lived.

Participants were asked to consider their experiences of cyberbullying in the period since they had started college (see Appendix B). No other examples in the literature were found in which researchers instructed participants to consider only the time period within their specific *context*: that is, since they started school/college. The same approach was adopted in West (2012), where a similar prevalence rate to this study of 6.7% was found for those reporting themselves to be cybervictims. A time period should be chosen that researchers are able to transparently justify, as this can facilitate better comparison with other studies. If researchers were interested in a specific time period during which experiences occurred, then a supplementary question asking participants whether or not the cyberbullying had occurred in a particular time period, for whatever end, would be useful. An example to illustrate the importance of choosing an appropriate time

period was with the experiences of Lucy and Laura (see section 4.8 for case studies). Both girls were repeatedly targeted in the first couple of months of starting college. Had a two-month timescale been applied in this study, as in, for example, Smith et al (2006), their experiences would not have been captured because the questionnaire data in this research was collected throughout March. However, Solberg and Olweus (2003) did provide good reason for why a time period, such as *in the last couple of months*, might be a useful measure, as discussed earlier in the thesis. What is important is that researchers are explicit in their reasons for choosing the time period, so the choice does not seem an arbitrary one.

The age of the participants was considered in the literature review as a factor that affected the prevalence of cyberbullying. Research by Slonje and Smith (2008) and Englander (2009), for example, found prevalence rates of cyber victimisation of older participants in their sample to be lower than younger students, who also studied in a different educational context. Together with the findings in this research, with 20.7% of participants reporting being cybervictims in secondary school compared to 7.9% in college, the pattern seems to be that older children are cyberbullied less than younger children. However, as well as the age of the participants being different in this research—and in the two studies above—the *educational context* in which the participants studied was also different. The content in which students learn could also be a factor that affects prevalence rates, which is why it is important that future research, of a comparative nature, consider cyberbullying in different contexts to compare findings and explain the differences. This level of comparison and can help to inform educational practice in regards to understanding and preventing cyberbullying in different contexts.

The Number of Cyberbullying Experiences and the Need for Repetition

Of the 7.9% of participants who reported being cybervictims, 42.5% reported being targeted once, meaning that the majority of victims reported being cyberbullied repeatedly. However, it was not possible to deduce from the findings whether those who reported being cyberbullied more than once were targeted by one or multiple cyberbullies, or whether they were cyberbullied for the same reason. These are important points in discussing repetition, as many bullying/cyberbullying researchers subscribe to repetition as a criterion for measuring and determining whether an incident should be regarded as cyberbullying. *All* those who were interviewed, as well as Sasha (see Sasha's story, section 4.8), reported experiences that involved being targeted repetitively in some way. For example, Lucy reported being cyberbullied 'almost every day' for most of her time at secondary school, and then was cyberbullied at college, which shows repetition both in terms of the *number of times* she was cyberbullied and in the *number of places* where she was cyberbullied. David and Laura were also cyberbullied at both school and college. Katie, Angela and Sasha also experienced repetitive victimisation, in terms of being bullied *and* cyberbullied; Sasha was victimised for twelve years and Katie referred to her experiences as 'relentless'. This discussion is important, as it advances how repetition can be seen to arise: for example, being verbally bullied and cyberbullied is repetitive, being bullied inside and outside of college is repetitive, being targeted by different people is repetitive, as is being targeted many times by the same person.

Repetition of experience was *not* a condition for the measurement of whether participants had been cybervictims in this research, since value was placed on the judgement and voice of participants when deciding for themselves, based on their

own lived experiences, whether they had been cybervictims or not. This philosophy was consistent with the phenomenological methodology that guided this study. Had the need for repetition been a requirement for determining whether a participant (having already selected that they were a cybervictim) was a cybervictim, then the prevalence rate in this research would have had to be re-calculated. Rather than the 7.9% of cybervictims reported thus far, the revised prevalence rate would be 5% (396–145 = 251, 251/4,993 x 100 = 5%). This would also have meant that the voices, experiences and perspectives of the 145 participants who reported being cyberbullied *once* would have been unheard and lost. The phenomenological design of this research ensured that this did not happen and that all participants who reported being cyberbullied were counted.

The implication of the need for repetition in cyberbullying research is problematic. It can lead to the under-reporting of the number of cybervictims in colleges (and in bullying and cyberbullying research as a whole) and takes from cybervictims their voice and understanding of *their* own experience. If single incidents of being cyberbullied are not included in the reporting of prevalence rates in research, there is real concern over whether participants are listened to. In practice, this can mean that their experiences are not understood and may not be taken seriously if and when they make a disclosure of what they believe to be cyberbullying that they have experienced. To illustrate this point, the following are experiences of cybervictims who reported being cyberbullied *just* once:

> *People were commenting on a Facebook status due to my sexuality* (Boy, 17, White)

> *Used Ask.fm and anonymously got told I was no good and that I boast about everything, I was judged by people on my sexuality, etc even though I am heterosexual and it was not nice for me* (Girl, 16, White)

> *A photo of me was uploaded to Facebook. The photo enhanced my small frame and I was later taunted by a group of people and called 'disgusting'* (Girl, 18, White)
>
> *My ex boyfriend sent me messages giving me abuse* (Girl, 19, White).

These experiences show that it is important for researchers to capture and report the lived experience of *all* participants, irrespective of how many times they reported being victimised. This is because, despite indicating experiencing cyberbullying once, the examples above involve repetition—either in the number of people involved or in terms of the medium used to send the messages. Therefore, there is a risk that participants may not report their experiences if researchers put emphasis on the need for repetition in their research design, instructions for participants, and specific questionnaire items. It is not yet certain how repetition should be dealt with in the context of cyberbullying, or whether it should be an important or overriding element at all, in determining or measuring participants' own lived experiences.

Until development or greater certainty has been achieved on this point, researchers should at least collect data on the number of occasions victims have been cyberbullied, with both single incidents and multiple incidents reported in the findings. Such was the case in Smith *et al*. (2006), where separate prevalence rates were presented for those who reported being cyberbullied *at least once* (22%) and *2–3 times* (6.6%), which was a useful feature in the reporting of their findings. However, other researchers, such as Aricak (2009), should be more mindful of what they ask participants when gathering information on their cyberbullying experiences. In his research, Aricak asked participants whether they had been cyberbullied *at least once in their lifetime*. Such wording was not helpful

in terms of determining accurate and recent prevalence of cyberbullying, and repetition can be difficult to determine in this case, since experiences could be, for example, ten years apart.

The literature does not address the question of whether a certain period of time needs to elapse between incidents, or whether this matters at all. Surely, it is the way that the victim feels that should prevail, as opposed to the number of incidents. The importance of repetition should not be discounted; however, its importance as a criterion in bullying and cyberbullying warrants reconsideration. To discount any experience that participants believe to be cyberbullying, whether repeated or not, when there is uncertainty surrounding the construct of what cyberbullying is and how it should be measured, would not be fair to participants because their voices are not being heard. This can also be misleading in terms of data collection and findings. There does need to be more consistency in the literature in relation to repetition. Researchers have yet to direct enough consideration to this issue, or at least have failed so far in recognising the issue of repetition in a deep or meaningful manner.

Location of the Cyberbullying and Identity of the Cyberbully

Two-thirds of cybervictims reported being cyberbullied outside of college, with a further three in ten cybervictims being targeted both inside and outside college, and less than five percent reported being cyberbullied only at college. This shows that being cyberbullied as a college student is not defined by college gates, as most cybervictims were cyberbullied outside of college. It may be the case that cyberbullies find it more risky to target their victims on college premises, given the authority of staff and the procedures in place to deal with such behaviour. This

view is supported by the finding that three in ten cybervictims reported being targeted by someone at college, but the majority of cybervictims were targeted outside college. A further one in five cybervictims reported being targeted by people both inside and outside college and one quarter of cybervictims were cyberbullied by people outside of college. This shows that cybervictims are targeted in different and multiple contexts and reinforces the notion that it can be more difficult to escape being cyberbullied compared with being bullied offline. Around a quarter of cybervictims reported not knowing the identity of the person who cyberbullied them, possibly because of the ability to send anonymous messages from sites such as Ask.FM, thus concealing the cyberbully's identity. Factors such as the anonymity of the cyberbully and being targeted in multiple contexts can contribute to the negative impact on the cybervictim.

Although the majority of cybervictims reported their experiences happening outside of college, colleges are nonetheless ideal places for victims to access support. This is usually through providing support services for students, such as the pastoral structure and counselling services, by covering topics such as bullying/cyberbullying in tutorial sessions, and by providing guidance and resources for all students on how to stay safe online and on treating people properly. Students should be aware that they can get support from their college and talk about their experiences no matter where they have occurred. Even if students are being cyberbullied outside of college, this can still affect their attendance levels and concentration in lessons, which in turn can affect students' learning and overall performance. The overall experience of being a college student can also be affected. This is discussed in more detail later on in this chapter.

One of the key themes from the coding of cybervictims' experience was the platform used for cyberbullying. The most frequent references were to Facebook, Twitter and Ask.FM, but references were also made to YouTube and Tumblr. This shows that the 'locations' where cybervictims are being targeted are online spaces that are public. These social networking sites are very popular with teenagers, and allow for easy visibility and sharing of information, which make them more appealing to use. Therefore, the cyberbullying is not really 'one-on-one', but instead many cybervictims have experienced being cyberbullied on social networking sites, rather than more 'closed' forms of communication, such as text messages. This means that content can be seen and shared by many people instantly, which can mean that the cybervictim and the cyberbully are not able to control the distribution of content posted online. Furthermore, an opportunity is created that allows other people who see the content to comment on it and to encourage other people to comment too, which can worsen the impact on the cybervictim and make it seem as though it is difficult or impossible to escape.

In terms of those who were interviewed, Lucy, David, Katie, Laura and Angela all experienced some form of cyberbullying through Facebook, and in most cases this was in addition to being targeted offline, or being cyberbullied on other social networking sites. What was apparent from the victims that were interviewed, including in Sasha's story, and in the experiences of the cybervictims who provided details of what had happened in the questionnaire, was that in many cases there was more than one bully/cyberbully. In this way, repetition of the victim's experience can be seen in the number of people who target them. What is more, in cases where the cybervictim could identify their cyberbullies, they usually included their friends. For example, Lucy was cyberbullied by some of her

close friends, including her best friend. David and Sarah were also cyberbullied by those whom they both considered to be their friends. Katie and Laura were targeted by groups of people; in both cases there was one main bully, who encouraged others to join in with the bullying too. Sasha was bullied and cyberbullied mainly by two girls whom she befriended at school, but then suffered a campaign of abuse at their hands both online and offline.

Being bullied or cyberbullied by friends, or by people who were considered to be friends, can be confusing for victims and add to the negative impact that the bullying has on them. This might be particularly the case if personal information was shared with friends whom they trusted. This can affect the victim's ability to trust and build other friendships in the future. For example, both David and Laura reported losing trust in people because they had been cyberbullied, and now find it harder to make friends.

Estimating the National Prevalence Level of Being Cyberbullied in Colleges

Cross *et al*. (2009) used their findings to extrapolate to the population in an effort to estimate the number of cybervictims in schools, including those who had experienced *persistent* cyberbullying (lasting more than a year). Using the findings from the sample in this research (7.9% cybervictims, 8.7% of these cyberbullied for more than a year) and the national population of 16-18 year olds in post-16 education (1,367,000), it was possible to estimate the number of college students that might have been cyberbullied as follows:

Estimated cybervictims	1,367,000 x 7.9% = 107,993
Estimated persistent cybervictims	107,993 x 8.9% = 9,396

These estimated prevalence rates show the potential number of students who attend colleges in England that might have experienced cyberbullying since starting college. These numbers are not insignificant and highlight the need for more research to be done in this context and age group. To put these numbers into perspective, the average number of students in the colleges that participated in this research was 2,023. Given that 107,993 are estimated to be cybervictims, this means that if all cybervictims were put together, 53 colleges nationally would be full of cybervictims, and nearly five of these would be full of students who had been cyberbullied for more than a year. Furthermore, assuming that the average time a student spends studying at college is two years, this also means that 8.9% of those who are cybervictims spend more than half of their time at college being cyberbullied. Surely, this picture was not the image that the DCSF (2009) imagined when they wrote:

> *Every learner should feel safe to learn and socialise. Every young person should be safe from victimisation and discrimination at College…No one should suffer the pain and indignity that bullying can cause* (p.9).

Despite physical/verbal bullying not being the focus of this thesis, it is necessary at this point to also illustrate the potential scale of offline bullying in colleges, to further support the need for more focus on research on bullying/cyberbullying in colleges. A total of 16.4% participants reported being victims of physical/verbal bullying, meaning that if the data is extrapolated in the same way as for cybervictims, the number of students in colleges nationally is estimated to be 224,188. This also highlights the importance of not researching bullying or cyberbullying in isolation, and the need for future research to consider the phenomenon of bullying behaviour as a whole, rather than only offline or online settings. This is particularly important since a number of students were involved

in both bullying and cyberbullying as bullies and victims (these are considered in below in the section on 'groups'). Furthermore, by adopting a broader approach to researching both bullying and cyberbullying, the connections between offline and online bullying can be better understood and a deeper understanding of the *lived experiences* of participants can be gathered. The risk is that by only considering cyberbullying, a whole world of experiences of students might not be gathered or understood.

In an effort to gain overall impressions from the sample, all questionnaire participants were asked to respond to questions about whether they thought cyberbullying and physical/verbal bullying were problems at their college, and whether they were worried about becoming victims of cyberbullying. The sample findings below were each multiplied by 1,367,000 in order to estimate national figures:

- 10.5% of participants in the sample considered cyberbullying to be a problem at their college, suggesting that an estimated 143,535 students on a national scale adopt this view.
- 13.9% of participants in the sample thought physical/verbal bullying was a problem at their college, suggesting that an estimated 190,013 students on a national scale adopt this view.
- 14.1% of participants in the sample reported being concerned about becoming victims of cyberbullying, suggesting that an estimated 192,747 students on a national scale adopt this view.

These findings and the extrapolations show, on a larger scale, the feelings of students in colleges generally, not just those who reported being cybervictims or

cyberbullies. This was an effort to reflect the voices of students generally, which have rarely featured in the wider literature. In order for cyberbullying to be more clearly understood in this age group and context, government, researchers, and leaders and teachers in education need to listen to young people, as their perspective matters and they deserve to be heard. Future research should pose questions to the whole sample about their feelings of cyberbullying, aside from their direct experience of being cybervictims or cyberbullies. This would allow an insight into the perceptions and perspectives of participants generally, which can be useful for understanding issues on a larger scale.

5.2.2 Cyberbullying Others

A total of 1.9% of participants in this research reported being cyberbullies since starting college. This is less than the 2.9% of the sample who reported being physical/verbal bullies since starting college. This comparison suggests that offline bullying is more prevalent than cyberbullying in colleges. This was the same pattern discussed above with being a cybervictim. Although physical/verbal bullying was not the central focus of this research, this finding highlighted the need for further investigation into all forms of bullying in post-16 contexts. Question items relating to experiences of bullying and cyberbullying others at *school* were not included; this was an omission from the questionnaire. Although consideration of such was not in the scope of this research, nonetheless it would have been useful to ask these questions to allow more detailed discussion of the possible connections between bullying and cyberbullying in schools and colleges. In hindsight, it became clear in the analysis of findings of the research questions that it would have been beneficial to be able to relate experiences of

bullying/cyberbullying at school with those at college. For example, in the discussion of 'groups' below, data on whether participants had been bullies/cyberbullies at school would have allowed more discussion on the risk or protective factors of being a bully/cyberbully.

As with the findings for being cyberbullied, it was possible to separate the overall rate for cyberbullying others to provide the prevalence rate for each of the 41 colleges that participated in this research (see Appendix H). However, the justification for not reporting institutional-level rates is the same as that provided for being cyberbullied: that is, issues with low individual sample sizes and response rates. It is useful to illustrate the range of prevalence rates in the different institutions, as this demonstrates the need for larger, aggregated samples, such as in this research, in an effort to reduce sampling bias and to increase the representativeness of the sample to the population. The prevalence rates for cyberbullying others ranged from 0% (based on 5 completed questionnaires and a response rate of 9.4%) to 12.5% (based on 48 completed questionnaires and a response rate of 2%).

Putting the Prevalence Rate into the Context of the Literature and Methodology

The prevalence rate of 1.9% for those reporting cyberbullying others was lower than the vast majority of cyberbullying research considered in the literature review. The only exception was in Olweus (2012), who found that between 1.1% and 3.2% of participants reported being a cyberbully between 2006 and 2010. Wilton and Campbell (2011) found 2% of their sample reported being cyberbullies, which is comparable to the findings in this study. Many of the

prevalence rates in the literature review were found to be higher: for example, the prevalence rate was 11% in Hinduja and Patchin (2006), 10.7% in West (2012) and 21% in Raskauskas and Stoltz (2007). As with the prevalence level reported for being cyberbullied, there are a number of reasons why the prevalence rate for cyberbullying others was lower than in other research in the literature review.

Studies with relatively low samples, such as Campbell (2005), who had 120 participants and an 11% prevalence rate, and Li (2007), who had 264 participants and a 17% prevalence rate, can return prevalence rates that are not representative of the population. In this research, there were 41 colleges and 5,690 participants, meaning that the prevalence rate of 1.9% can be viewed as more reliable and representative of the population. Researchers are therefore encouraged to use large sample sizes across a number of different sites to ensure a higher rate of reliability. However, by aggregating the findings of a large sample across many sites, institutional-level prevalence rates are hidden. For example, 12.5% of 48 participants at one college in this research reported being cyberbullies and this was seen to be the highest amongst the 41 colleges that participated. However, this rate was not representative of the overall sample, although it *can* be compared with cyber perpetration rates in studies with relatively small samples, such as the 11% reported in the case of Campbell (2005). Comparison at the college level allows for differences between institutions to be taken into account, which can facilitate the understanding and discussion of cyberbullying. This should be the focus of a future cyberbullying study as investigation at the college level will be more appropriate for dealing with local issues compared to aggregated data.

The prevalence rate of 1.9% in this study for cyberbullying others can be compared to the similar levels in reported by Olweus (2012) of between 1.1% and 3.2%, with sample sizes of 9,000 and 440,000. These findings are significant because of the large sample sizes, which reinforce the need for larger sample sizes to provide more representative samples and more reliable prevalence rates. There were at least two methodological and measurement differences between Olweus's study and this research. First, Olweus asked participants to consider only their experiences 'in the last couple of months' (ibid, p.523). As has already been considered, this way of measuring cyberbullying prevalence can exclude some participants' experiences, which can therefore lead to a comparatively lower prevalence rate. Second, Olweus provided participants with five frequency scales from which to choose in relation to their experiences of cyberbullying, the first three of which are most meaningful in the context of this discussion: 'I haven't been (cyber)bullied at school in the last couple of months', 'It has only happened once or twice', and '2–3 times a month or more' (p.523). Participants who selected the first frequency were discounted, which made sense in terms of the time period considered. However, participants who selected 'once or twice' were *not* included as having been (cyber)bullied because of 'statistical and other considerations' (p.524) that were not made explicit. However, these might have been the same reasons provided in Solberg and Olweus (2003), which also did not include those who reported being victims 'once or twice'. Olweus (2012) did not provide a breakdown of participants who selected each frequency, which does not show transparency, and could be a reason for the low prevalence rates in his research.

The measurement of cyberbullying is problematic and misleading because, even if repetition is required, which is still inconclusive, then discounting participants who selected *1–2 times* means that those individuals who were targeted *2 times* could have their voices and experiences lost because of the measurement preferences of a researcher. This is not good enough, and highlights the need for researchers to ensure more transparent reasons for making their decision in terms of what to include/exclude and, in any case, to present all their findings in their included/excluded categories so that they can still be critiqued by others. With these points noted, what was a seemingly comparable result to the prevalence findings in this research has been refuted based on methodological and measurement differences. This discussion also highlights the importance of not taking and comparing prevalence rates at face value, as these can be misleading.

Given the widely cited claims that repetition is required for behaviours to be regarded as cyberbullying, the impact of applying this criterion to this study is that almost half of those reporting themselves to be cyberbullies would not be regarded as cyberbullies because of the lack of repetition (44.4% of cyberbullies reported by cyberbullying others *once*). The majority of cyberbullies reported cyberbullying others multiple times, with a quarter of all cyberbullies reporting that they had cyberbullied others *more than 10 times.* However, cyberbullies were not asked a question relating to how many victims they each targeted, as it may not be the case that cyberbullies targeted just one person. There was no research identified in the wider literature to draw comparisons with regard to the repetition of cyberbullying others; thus far, no researchers have considered this issue, which should therefore be the focus of future research.

The age of participants was another factor discussed in the literature review that was seen to affect prevalence levels of cyberbullying others. The literature pointed towards older children in secondary schools being more involved in cyberbullying others than younger age groups (see Wilton and Campbell, 2011 and Ybarra and Mitchell, 2004), with the participants' age being suggested as a source of power imbalance, meaning that younger children would find it harder to defend themselves. However, the notion that older teenagers were more likely to be cyberbullies was found not to be the case in Smith *et al.* (2008), who reported that 11.9% of secondary school children in their survey were engaged in cyberbullying others, compared to a lower rate of 3.3% amongst sixth form students. Participants in this research were not asked about whether they cyberbullied others in secondary school, which represented a missed opportunity to compare the involvement of the same participants in different contexts. Such data would have been useful in investigating the behaviour of participants at different ages in different contexts. This should be the focus of future research.

Notwithstanding the very low prevalence rate for cyberbullying others in this study, the notion that 16–19 year olds engage less in cyberbullying others than younger age groups is plausible because older teenagers tend to be behaviourally more mature than younger children and may therefore decide against engaging in cyberbullying behaviours. Such was the hypothesis of Englander (2009), who found that 23% of high school students reported being cyberbullies compared to a lower rate of 3% for college students. However, the age categories in this research are different because it is US research (high school 14–18 year olds and college 18–22 year olds), and there was no further disaggregation of prevalence figures

for each age within these groupings, making further comparison with this research difficult.

The relative maturity of older students, compared to younger pupils, coupled with studying in a different context, could be reasons behind the lower prevalence rate in this research. Those who attend colleges are most likely to be those who wish to pursue their education and want to achieve. However, given the rise in the participation age, for some teenagers, attending college might now be a case of having to rather than wanting to. For other students, attending college provides a fresh start, and therefore they might not want to engage in behaviours such as cyberbullying. What is needed is more research—with similar sample sizes, in the same context, age group and methodological orientation—to be undertaken so that better comparisons can be made with the findings in this research.

Estimating the National Prevalence Level of Cyberbullies in Colleges

Given that the prevalence rate in the sample for cyberbullying others was 1.9% and there are approximately 1,367,000 students aged 16-18 in post-16 education, it is possible to estimate the number of cyberbullies in colleges in England as around 25,973. Such an extrapolation highlights the extent to which cyberbullying might be prevalent in colleges in England, and reinforces the need for further research amongst this age group and in this context. Given that the average number of students in colleges that participated in this research was 2,023, this means that if all cyberbullies were put together, thirteen colleges would be full of students who reported cyberbullying others. This potential picture of cyberbullying in colleges adds to the need to undertake more research amongst this age group and in this context.

5.3 Are there Particular Groups that Engage in or Experience Cyberbullying Disproportionately?

The consideration and analysis of the various physiognomies of cybervictims and cyberbullies has revealed groups that may, in general terms, be more at risk of being cybervictims or cyberbullies. The statistical findings that relate to this section can be found in the tables 33-36 in the findings chapter, but a reminder of each relationship is provided beneath each heading in narrative form. This section is organised by demographic characteristic to enable the relationship between being a cyberbully and being a cybervictim to be seen more clearly. Where possible, references to the wider literature and to the qualitative data are used, but this was not always possible, as the relationship between demographics and cyberbullying are not considered to a large extent in the research literature. A table is presented at the end of this section which summarises the groups that have been disproportionately involved in cyberbullying as either cybervictims or cyberbullies.

Whilst analysing the data related to this section, it became apparent that connections were possible between the involvement of different demographics in cyberbullying and the reasons why they were cybervictims or cyberbullies. This level of analysis and discussion was an unintended outcome of this research and as such has not been considered in as much depth as if it had been part of the research scope. Instead, the intention was that the research questions that related to *disproportionate involvement in cyberbullying* and *reasons for cyberbullying* would be discussed in their own right. However, there would have been an obvious gap in the discussion of these two research questions if the connections

between them were not at least recognised. Therefore, some discussion of these relationships is included, but the focus remains on answering the research questions set, because of the constraints with word limits. Thus, the discussion below focuses on establishing disproportionate relationships, with some discussion of the reasons for each demographic considered in the next section on *reasons for engaging in cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied.* In any case, consideration of such a relationship is better suited to future research where this was part of the defined scope. The full list of reasons for cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied—separated by demographic—can be found in Appendix L, which should be referred to in the reading of this research question on *groups* and the next one on *reasons*.

5.3.1 Gender

Cyberbullies

Finding: Boys were more likely to be cyberbullies

Statistically significant: Yes

Of the cyberbullies in this study, two-thirds were boys and one-third were girls. In the whole sample, 2.9% of boys and 1.1% of girls reported being cyberbullies. The finding that boys were more likely than girls to be cyberbullies was consistent with the findings in Li (2006), Ang and Goh (2010), Fanti *et al.* (2012) and Ackers (2012). Further, Englander (2009) found that older boys in 'college' were more likely to be cyberbullies, whereas in high school, more girls reported being cyberbullies.

The whole sample was asked about their perception of which gender they thought was more involved in cyberbullying as a bully: this reached beyond the voices of those who were cybervictims. The voices of students generally should not be discounted, especially given the dearth of research in post-16 contexts, and more research should consider the views and perceptions of the sample as a whole in order that the understanding of relationships, such as that between gender and cyberbullying, are informed rather than speculative. The majority of participants in the whole sample (67.3%) believed that neither boys nor girls were more or less involved than the other in cyberbullying others. Those who selected a specific gender in most cases chose girls, with less than one in ten participants believing that boys were more involved cyberbullying others than girls. The finding that boys were more likely to report being cyberbullies than girls was inconsistent with the general impression of the sample. Such a disparity, though, highlighted the difference between what is reality and what is perceived to be real, which can lead to false impressions and gender stereotypes. Thus, policy makers, researchers and practitioners need to be mindful of how they approach dealing with cyberbullying in a way that does not illustrate one gender as being 'the cyberbully' and the other as being 'the cybervictim', as this can distort perceptions. Instead, a balanced approach is needed that recognises that both boys and girls are involved in cyberbullying as bullies and victims.

The most frequently cited reason that participants provided for their perception that boys were more involved in cyberbullying than girls was that *boys are more aggressive*. Other coded answers included what participants had *witnessed*, and the view that *boys are jealous of other boys*. However, the perception of participants that boys are more aggressive does not explain *why* they are involved

as cyberbullies more than girls. Since boys have been more keenly associated with physical forms of bullying (Li, 2006; Snell and Englander, 2010), the finding that boys were more likely to be cyberbullies, and the *perception* that boys were more involved because of aggression, can suggest that boys channel their aggression online. However, evidence of this notion was lacking in terms of accounts written by cyberbullies who were boys. The two quotes below indicate the nature of the cyberbullying carried out by boys, but it appears as though they do not perceive their own behaviour as aggressive or use 'aggression' as a word in their descriptions:

> *I dunno* (sic), *friends have jokes with one another, whther* (sic) *online or offline. If a joke goes 'too far' then everyone suddenly labels it bullying nowadays, don't know why*. (Boy cyberbully, 18, White)

> *Well there are many definitions to cyberbullying however in my first year I would of* (sic) *got involved in numerous arguments over the social network sites and may have called people names and put them down because of their views on things.* (Boy cyberbully, 19, White Other)

The boys above perceived their behaviour as a joke going too far (much like how Shakespeare described 'bullying': see section 1.3), and as an argument that included name-calling, but neither of these means the behaviour was aggressive. It is interesting that the wider sample perceived the involvement of boys in cyberbullying others because of aggression, but this was not coded in the responses of boys' experiences. However, what was found to support this view was that 36% of boy cyberbullies cited *anger* as a reason for their behaviour, although the corresponding figure for girls was 61%. Nonetheless, this involves conflating the terms 'anger' and 'aggression', which are not the same. More research is needed to uncover the relationships and perceived relationships

between being a cyberbully and gender, as consideration of this issue so far has been only at surface level.

Although boys were more likely to be cyberbullies in this research, one-third of those reporting to be cyberbullies were girls. Importantly, this shows that both boys and girls were found to be engaged in cyberbullying others, but in different proportions. Nearly three times as many participants believed that girls were more involved than boys in cyberbullying others, but many more participants provided reasons why they perceived girls to be cyberbullies more than boys (211 responses for girls compared to 29 responses for boys). Around one-third of comments from those believing that girls were more involved than boys in cyberbullying others were coded as *girls are bitches/bitchy*, which was the most prevalent perception. Interestingly, this code did not feature in wider literature on bullying or cyberbullying, but more research must be undertaken to establish whether is specific to those aged 16-19 years old. Around ten percent of participants cited the perception that *girls hide behind computer screens rather than confronting people face-to-face / like to do things behind people's backs, whereas boys are more physical and say things to people's faces*. This perception was consistent with the wider literature (see Kowalski and Limber, 2007; Underwood and Rosen, 2010). This perception is an interesting one and difficult to immediately reconcile with the finding in this research that boys were more likely to be cyberbullies than girls. The *perception* that boys engage in physical forms of bullying and girls engage in more indirect forms of bullying needs to be readdressed in light of the potential that both boys and girls can access *technology* and use it to cyberbully someone else.

Kowalski *et al*. (2008) suggested that girls engaged in behaviours such as gossiping, and cyberbullied others because of jealousy. These perceptions of girls' involvement in cyberbullying were also coded from the responses of participants in this research: *girls like to gossip* and *girls are jealous of other girls, including their looks.* Interestingly, one of the main codes generated for why boys were perceived to cyberbully more than girls was *boys are jealous of other boys*; suggesting that jealousy is a common reason why boys and girls target each other. This is in addition to one-fifth of cyberbullies citing 'jealousy' as a reason for cyberbullying others; by gender, the percentages of boys and girls who cyberbullied others because of jealousy were 10% and 25% respectively (Appendix L). This shows that girls cyberbullied others because of jealousy more than boys. Interestingly, the most common reasons provided by both boys and girls, whether they were cybervictims or cyberbullies, were *physical appearance, intelligence/ability,* and *friendship groups*. These are all aspects of a person's life that others can be jealous of; however, this link was not considered in this research.

Given that *jealousy* was a common perception and finding as to why boys and girls were involved in cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied, the findings were analysed more closely to determine whether boys were cyberbullied by boys or girls and vice versa. This data is shown in the table below.

Table 49: Cybervictims' report of the proportion of each gender that cyberbullied them

	Boys		Girls	
	N	%	N	%
All boys	34	32.4	31	13.6
Mostly boys and some girls	14	13.3	13	5.7
Boys and girls equally	12	11.4	31	13.6
Mostly girls and some boys	4	3.8	50	21.9

All girls	10	9.5	63	27.6
I do not know	31	29.5	40	17.5
Total	105	100.0	228	100.0

The highest proportion reported by boy cybervictims involved in cyberbullying them was 'all boys' and for girl cybervictims was 'all girls'. This relationship was consistent with the participants' perspective that *boys cyberbully boys* and *girls cyberbully girls*. This relationship is also somewhat reinforced by the finding that the next most prevalent proportion (discounting where the identity of the cyberbully was not known) for each gender was 'mostly boys' and 'mostly girls', respectively. Conversely, the *lowest* frequencies reported by each gender referred to being targeted entirely or mostly by the opposite gender. Overall, this data shows that boys are mostly or predominantly cyberbullied by other boys and girls are mostly or predominantly cyberbullied by other girls. However, these relationships could be affected by the finding that nearly a third of boys and nearly a fifth of girls reported not knowing the gender of the person/people who cyberbullied them. This links to the fact that cyberbullies can choose to remain anonymous on the internet, which can affect research carried out in terms of trying to identify those groups that are more or less involved in cyberbullying. What these findings did not show was how many cyberbullies there were in each of the gender proportions considered above. The size of the group may be important in terms of social and relational bullying, as well as for measuring the extent of the power imbalance and the intensity of the cyberbullying on the whole.

The role that 'gender' plays in being a cyberbully is an interesting one, but it is not definitive in being able to label who is a cyberbully. Both boys and girls have been found to engage in cyberbullying others. It was interesting that most of the

sample perceived neither gender as being *more* involved in cyberbullying others, yet the findings show that boys were more likely to be cyberbullies than girls. More research needs to be undertaken to establish the role of *gender* in cyberbullying; the gender of a student might be important in determining a person's involvement in cyberbullying, but what is needed is more of an understanding of *why* boys are cyberbullies and *why* girls are cyberbullies. Without this level of consideration, cyberbullying research runs the risk of labelling boys as cyberbullies without knowing why. Such a basic conclusion is not satisfactory given the complexity of cyberbullying as a behavioural phenomenon. It might be that boys and girls *perceive* cyberbullying to be different, but this should be the focus of research dedicated to investigating the role of gender in cyberbullying. Another possible explanation for the findings is differential reporting by boys or girls, but this, too, needs to be investigated by future research.

Cybervictims

Finding: Girls were more likely to be cybervictims

Statistically significant: Yes

Two-thirds of cybervictims in this study were girls and one-third were boys, which was the opposite to the gender relationship for cyberbullying others. In the whole sample, 9.5% of girls reported being cybervictims compared to 5.9% of boys. The finding that girls were more likely to be cybervictims than boys was consistent with the findings in Kowalski *et al.* (2008), Cross *et al*. (2009) (both for isolated and persistent cyberbullying) and Snell and Englander (2010).

Two-thirds of participants believed that neither gender was more involved than the other in being a cybervictim. This was the same perception of participants for the gender relationships with those engaged in cyberbullying others. The vast majority of participants who selected a gender perceived girls to be cyberbullied more than boys (only 3.9% of the whole sample thought boys were more likely to be cybervictims compared to girls). This pattern is consistent with the finding that girls were more likely to be cyberbullies. The most common response that participants provided for why they perceived girls to be cybervictims more than boys was *girls are more vulnerable/easier to target because they put photos of themselves online that attract comments on their looks and physical appearance.* This perception is linked with the code considered earlier for girls being more involved in cyberbullying others, which was *girls are jealous of other girls, so they cyberbully* them.

Also connected to this perception was the work of Phippin (2012), who found that girls were more likely to self-generate images at the request of boys, which could provide the content for being cyberbullied. Furthermore, two-thirds of cybervictims selected 'physical appearance' as a reason why they were cyberbullied, which was the most common reason from those available to select. Almost one-third of cyberbullies reported 'physical appearance' as a reason why they cyberbullied someone, which was the third most common reason out of the ten options from which cyberbullies could select. When the finding for physical appearance was broken down by gender, it was found that 79% of girls reported being cyberbullied because of their physical appearance, compared to 57% of boys (Appendix L).

Furthermore, one of the more prominent themes that emerged from the coding of cybervictims' experiences related to comments made on photos that girls had uploaded to social networking sites such as Facebook, which were subsequently shared with other people. These cybervictims often reported that comments left on the photos related to their looks and physical appearance, often accompanied by names such as 'fat' or 'ugly'. What was also apparent was that David, Sarah, Katie, Laura and Angela reported being bullied or cyberbullied because of their looks. This adds to 'physical appearance' being a key theme of the nature and reason why cybervictims were targeted.

Overall, it has been found that both boys and girls were involved in cyberbullying as both cyberbullies and cybervictims, although in different proportions. Although the relationships between gender and being cyberbullied and cyberbullying others were both statistically significant, it is important to bear in mind that the majority of participants reported not *perceiving* either gender as more or less involved than the other for being a cybervictim or cyberbully. The following quote from a participant in this research reflects the importance of not focussing on one gender in cyberbullying:

> *I don't believe cyberbullying is gender specific at all and by defining it that way we eliminate the gender who we assume don't get involved and marginalise them* (Girl, 17, White British)

Although this research has contributed to the discussion on gender, it remains the case that the role of gender in cyberbullying has been virtually unexamined amongst 16–19 year olds specifically. This therefore warrants further investigation in order to establish how gender plays a role in cyberbullying in this age group, including in terms of the specific behaviours in which each boys and

girls engage, and the reasons why. Such research would be beneficial to triangulate the findings of this study and to further understand the relationship between gender and cyberbullying.

5.3.2 Age

Cyberbullies

Finding: 19-year-olds were most likely to be cyberbullies

Statistically significant: No

Although the highest percentage of cyberbullies was found to be amongst those aged 17 years old (46.2%), this was in proportion to the amount of 17-year-olds in the sample (45.5%). Therefore, 17-year-olds were not *disproportionately* involved in cyberbullying others. This was also the case for 16-year-olds and 18-year-olds. It was clear from the findings that there were cyberbullies amongst all the ages considered. However, a disproportionate number of 19-year-olds reported cyberbullying others compared to the number of 19-year-olds in the sample (7.5% and 5.3%, respectively). However, this difference was not great enough for the relationship between age and cyberbullying others to be statistically significant. Nonetheless, the relatively higher prevalence for 19-year-olds does make sense given that participants were asked to consider their experience of cyberbullying others since they started college. Since 19-year-olds are likely to have been studying at college longer than younger students, it is therefore plausible that they would be more likely to have reported cyberbullying others, since they might have considered a longer period of time in their responses. However, this is only speculation, as participants were not asked how long ago their experiences occurred. That is to say, just because participants were 19 years old when they

completed the survey, this does not mean that they were 19 years old when they engaged in cyberbullying others. In future research, it would be more helpful if the age at which participants cyberbullied others was established.

Data was not collected from the sample regarding their involvement in cyberbullying others in secondary school: therefore, it was not possible to compare the cyberbullying behaviours of college students to their behaviour at secondary school. However, the wider literature points towards younger teenagers being involved in cyberbullying others more than older teenagers. For example, in Smith *et al*. (2008), older students in sixth form were found to engage less in cyberbullying others compared to younger students in secondary school (3% and 11.9%, respectively), and Wilton and Campbell (2011) found that those aged 14 and 15 years old were most likely to report bullying and cyberbullying others. What is not known from this research and in the wider literature is the relationship between the age of the cyberbully and the age of the cybervictim, or whether this is connected or whether it matters.

Guerra *et al.* (2011) suggested that older children could be in a position to target younger children because age can act as a source of power imbalance. Yet, Englander (2009) suggested that older students engaged less in cyberbullying others because they were more mature. This is a plausible claim, supported somewhat by the finding in this study that only 1.9% of college students reported cyberbullying others. That said, four in ten cyberbullies reported cyberbullying others for 'fun' and engaging in discriminatory forms of cyberbullying such as targeting others based on their sexual orientation and their ethnicity, which can suggest immature behaviour. Although it is idealistic to believe that all teenagers

mature to the standard at which they will not behave in ways that are discriminatory or engage in cyberbullying others for fun, it is concerning nonetheless that in a modern Western society, there are older teenagers, who are pursuing further education, who report targeting others based on their sexual orientation and ethnicity. This highlights that more must be done in colleges, through tutorials, in terms of raising awareness of discriminatory forms of cyberbullying and the expectation of treating people with respect regardless of their demographics. It is too naïve to suggest that older teenagers are mature and therefore do not cyberbully others; if government, researchers and education leaders think this, then it is no wonder that there has been a lack of research focus in post-16 education. Students in colleges, like any other age group or educational setting, need guidance and support with how to behave as responsible citizens and e-citizens; it cannot be taken for granted that when starting college education, teenagers automatically know how to behave and treat people in a way that is not considered to be bullying or cyberbullying.

Cybervictims

Finding: 18-year-olds and 19-year-olds were more likely to be cybervictims

Statistically significant: No

Similar to cyberbullies, the highest proportion of cybervictims were aged 17 (42.9%), which was slightly lower compared to the proportion of 17-year-olds in the sample. This was the same for 16 year olds, and therefore 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds were proportionately less likely to be cyberbullied. Those aged 18 and 19 were disproportionately more involved in being cyberbullied compared to

the age distribution of the sample. However, as with cyberbullies, this difference was not great enough to result in a statistically significant relationship between age and being a cybervictim. Nonetheless, the lower rates reported by 16- and 17-year-olds for being cyberbullied might be explained by them being at college for a shorter period of time compared to 18- and 19-year-olds, who had been at college for a relatively longer period of time and accordingly reported higher levels of victimisation. Again, as with cyberbullies, it was not necessarily the case that the cybervictims were cyberbullied at the same age as when they completed the questionnaire. What was clear from the findings is that there were cybervictims in all of the ages considered, although at different proportions.

McDougall (1999) suggested that being bullied was less of an issue when teenagers progressed to college. This claim is somewhat plausible, and is supported by the relatively lower prevalence rates in college compared to secondary school of being bullied (16.4% and 42.9%, respectively) and cyberbullied (7.9% and 20.7% respectively). However, it is clear that bullying and cyberbullying occur in colleges, despite the lower rates reported compared to secondary school. Smith *et al*. (1999) hypothesised that being *bullied* decreased with age because of four reasons, one of which was that there were fewer children older than them in school as they got older who could bully them. This connects to the claim that Guerra *et al.* (2011) made about the power imbalance being based on age. In relation to *cyberbullying*, Smith *et al.* (2008) found that older students in sixth form reported being cyberbullied less than those in secondary school (8% and 17.6%, respectively). With cyberbullying, there is more possibility to target people outside the grounds of their educational environment,

and more opportunity to remain anonymous so that age becomes less of a factor in the power imbalance.

It has been shown that students in colleges were cyberbullied less than in pupils in secondary schools, but variations exist in prevalence rates in each of these contexts. In this research, older teenagers in college were found to be disproportionately victimised compared to younger students, with the turning point being 18 years old. In Bauman and Pero (2010) and Cross et al. (2009), cybervictims in schools were most common amongst those aged 14-15 years old. What is not yet known, given the decrease in being cyberbullied, is whether this fall is because teenagers are getting older, or whether it is related to being in a different education context, or both. Since the ages at which participants reported being cyberbullied at school and at college were not collected in this research, it was not possible to determine at what age their experience of cyberbullying stopped, or to examine the reasons why it stopped at that age. Such investigation would provide more information to help understand how age and context is linked to being a cybervictim. Research with such a focus would also reveal particular times in a young person's life in education where they might be particularly vulnerable to being cybervictims and enable schools and colleges to ensure that more emphasis is put on raising awareness of cyberbullying at these times. However, the risk here of delivering tutorials about cyberbullying at particular times is that this might leave gaps when schools and colleges do not provide guidance to their students. Instead, there should be a drip-feed approach where schools and colleges provide guidance and resources to students frequently, so that the message is reinforced. Given that in secondary schools 14-15 year olds are more likely to be cyberbullied and in colleges 18-19 year olds are more likely

to be cybervictims, it appears that guidance is needed all the way through school and college, since at these ages, they have nearly finished school and college.

5.3.3 College Cyberbully

Cybervictims

Finding: Cybervictims at college were more likely to be cyberbullies at college (and vice versa)

Statistically significant: Yes

It was a rare feature of the wider literature on cyberbullying whether the same participants were both cyberbullies and cybervictims. In this research, 9.1% of cybervictims also reported being cyberbullies, and 33% of cyberbullies also reported being cybervictims. These rates were higher than expected: therefore, the relationship between being a cybervictim and being a cyberbully was statistically significant.

This relationship is interesting because rather than being involved in cyberbullying as *just* a victim, a statistically significant proportion of cybervictims were also cyberbullies. This suggests that cybervictims can also exercise an imbalance of power over others and potentially cause others to feel harm. Likewise, cyberbullies, who may have intended to cause harm to others and have relatively more power over others, also reported being cybervictims, therefore potentially being the recipients of harm by others. This finding is important, as it highlights the dual roles that a statistically significant proportion of those involved in cyberbullying reported having. This also highlights the complexities of

understanding cyberbullying as a behavioural phenomenon, as those involved were not just ‘pure cybervictims’ or ‘pure cyberbullies’.

What is not known from the findings in this research is whether being cyberbullied or cyberbullying others came first, whether this relationship matters, or whether the bullying and victimisation were related in some way. What was revealed, however, was that 75% of cybervictims who also reported being cyberbullies reported being targeted about their ‘physical appearance’, which was the most prevalent of the reasons selected. The nature of the relationship between being a cybervictim and being a cyberbully becomes clearer given that 57% of cyberbullies reported targeting their victim(s) because of ‘anger’, and 37% each selected ‘revenge’ and ‘provocation’ as a reason. Therefore, it may be the case that some students might have been cyberbullied and this made them angry and provoked them to get revenge on the person who cyberbullied them. This line of reasoning is only speculation, but is supported by the following description provided by one boy who reported being both a cyberbully and a cybervictim:

> *I was probably a bit of a dick on the internet, a few people had a go at me and maybe took it too far. That is how it almost always is, the 'victim' has been being cocky, arrogant, or generally acting as if they are better in some way than the 'bully' (without knowing they've been being like this), then the 'bully' and various other people have often retliated* (sic) *in some verbal or internet type way, to which the 'vitim'* (sic) *is incredibly suprised* (sic) *and calls that mass retaliation to them just being a dick, ‘cyberbullying’.* (Boy cybervictim and cyberbully, 16, White)

The dual role that a disproportionate number of participants have in cyberbullying highlights the non-linearity of experience in some situations, such as the account above. This can also suggest that a student could be a cyberbully at college, but be cyberbullied themselves by others at college or outside of college. Similarly, a student could be a cybervictim at college but could be a cyberbully outside of

college. In another scenario, it may be that another student has been repeatedly and persistently cyberbullied by many people over a long period of time both inside and outside of college, and one day decides to strike out against someone online—behaving as a cyberbully might—because they have become so upset and angry that they have to release their feelings. The likelihood of this latter scenario happening might increase if the student is disinhibited because of how they feel, and also because of the possible veil of anonymity of technology.

Since cyberbullying involves a psychological power imbalance as opposed to one based on physical strength, it is plausible to suggest that it might be easier for a victim of bullying or cyberbullying to become a cyberbully than it is for a physical victim to become a physical bully. However, more research is needed to investigate this relationship between being a cyberbully and being a cybervictim in greater depth. Future research should therefore seek to understand the *whole experience* of those who report being cybervictims and cyberbullies, without focussing on just one role, as this can restrict relationships and patterns of a person's *lived experience.* Research that concentrates on investigating 'cyberbullying others' or 'being cyberbullied', without considering the wider environment or reasons why students are cyberbullies or cybervictims, risks not understanding the phenomenon as a whole. What is clear is that it might not be as simple or appropriate to label someone as just being a 'cyberbully' or a 'cybervictim', as the circumstances surrounding the experiences can be more complex. Future research should also ask participants whether they have been engaged in cyberbullying as a bully *and* as a victim, since there has not been enough research to date that has considered this. This will allow more

understanding of the relationship between *how* and *why* students are both victims and bullies.

5.3.4 Offline Victim at College

Cyberbullies

Finding: Offline victims at college were more likely to be cyberbullies at college

Statistically significant: Yes

A total of 37.4% of cyberbullies also reported being victims of offline bullying at college. This amount was more than expected and therefore a disproportional amount of bully victims were also cyberbullies. It is not known whether being bullied or being a cyberbully came first, or whether the incidents were related. If we assume that the two were related, this finding becomes more interesting, because it can then suggest that those who were bullied offline might have resorted to cyberbullying others in an effort to get revenge online on the person who bullied them. Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) suggested the possibility that an offline victim of bullying, who might be physically weaker than their bully, could become a cyberbully as a form of revenge. In this way, the victim may create a power imbalance that is psychological rather than physical, and target their bully to get revenge by becoming a cyberbully. This also demonstrates how bullying and cyberbullying can move between offline and online contexts and how they can be related. The relationship between being a cyberbully and being an offline victim may be connected by anger and revenge, since 63% of cyberbullies who also reported being offline victims reported cyberbullying others because of anger and 44% because of revenge (Appendix L).

Cybervictims

Finding: Offline victims at college were more likely to be cybervictims at college

Statistically significant: Yes

Two-thirds of cybervictims reported also being victims of offline bullying whilst at college. This was more than expected and a disproportional and statistically significant relationship was found between the two types of victimisation: that is, those who reported being cybervictims at college were also more likely to be victims of offline bullying at college. The findings in this research did not reveal which type of victimisation came first or whether the victims' experiences of being bullied and cyberbullied were connected. What is also unknown is whether the same people targeted the victims for the same reasons. Further research is needed to investigate at a deeper level those who report being both bullied and cyberbullied in order that more can be understood about this relationship.

Katie and Angela were victims of offline and online bullying at school, and David and Sasha were victims of offline and online bullying both at school and at college. This shows repetition in the places and contexts in which the victims were targeted, and also how their experiences occurred both online and offline. Importantly, the consequences of being bullied in both online and offline contexts could worsen the impact of harm being caused to the victim. For example, Sasha and David were both scared of going outside without other people and suffered from low self-confidence. The consequences of being cyberbullied are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

5.3.5 Cybervictim at School

Cyberbullies

Finding: Those who were *not* cybervictims at schools were more likely to be cyberbullies at college

Statistically significant: Yes

Two-thirds of cyberbullies reported *not* being cybervictims at school, which was more than expected, therefore showing that those who were not cybervictims at school were disproportionately more likely to be cyberbullies at college. This relationship was statistically significant. No other research was identified in the research literature with which to compare this finding.

One possible way of explaining this relationship is to consider the relationship in the alternative: *cybervictims at school were less likely to be cyberbullies at college*. When worded and considered in this way, it may be that those who had experienced cyberbullying at school were in a better position to know how it feels to be cyberbullied than those who had not been cybervictims at school. Therefore, they were less likely to engage in cyberbullying at college because they understood the impact that such behaviour had because they had experienced it themselves.

Clearly, suggesting that school children should subject themselves or be subjected to cyberbullying just so they know how it feels and are therefore less likely to subject others to it when they go to college is hardly a well-considered or healthy way of reducing the prevalence of cyberbullying. However, it does highlight the potential to introduce and develop approaches that include empathy for others and

treating people properly in schools and colleges, which can include the effects of cyberbullying on others.

Cybervictims

Finding: Cybervictims at school were more likely to be cybervictims at college

Statistically significant: Yes

Of those who reported being cybervictims at college, 77.6% also reported being cybervictims when they were at secondary school. This finding shows that those who were cyberbullied at school were disproportionately more likely to be cyberbullied at college. Although this relationship was statistically significant, what is not known from the findings is whether the cyberbullying that was experienced at school and at college was perpetrated by the same people or for the same reason. What is clear, however, is that the majority of cybervictims in this research continued to be cyberbullied despite moving to a different educational setting to progress with their education.

This relatively long-term and possibly persistent nature of being cyberbullied can worsen the impact and consequences of being a cybervictim, especially given that it may be hard for cybervictims to escape being cyberbullied by finishing school and starting college, as a change in the physical environment may not prevent the cyberbullying from continuing. This shows how cyberbullying can transcend geographical and institutional boundaries. Details were not collected from college cybervictims about their experiences at school, but those who had experienced cyberbullying in both contexts reported being cyberbullied because of their physical appearance (78%), friendship groups (58%) and their intelligence (40%),

which were the three most prevalent reasons reported (Appendix L). Without further investigation, it is difficult to speculate on whether these would have been the same reasons for being cyberbullied at school, since these are features of a person that can alter over time.

Lucy, David, Laura and Sasha were all cybervictims at school as well as at college (see section 4.8 for details). Lucy and Laura were cyberbullied mostly at secondary school, with their experiences lasting for the first of couple months after starting college. David had to change schools because of being a victim of bullying and cyberbullying, which did not stop when he started college. Sasha was cyberbullied by the same girl when she started college, but Sasha's experiences, again with the same girl, were also prevalent outside of college. The consequences of long-term victimisation are considered later in this chapter, but given that over three-quarters of cybervictims in this study also reported being cyberbullied at school, this finding highlights a serious need to ensure that colleges help and support students who are being cyberbullied so that the consequences of persistent and long-term victimisation do not affect them in later life.

5.3.6 Offline Victim at School

Cyberbullies

Finding: Offline victims at school were more likely to be cyberbullies at college

Statistically significant: Yes

Of those in the sample who reported being cyberbullies at college, 57.1% also reported being victims of offline bullying at school. This shows that cyberbullies

at college were disproportionately more likely to have reported being victims of offline bullying at school, and this relationship was statistically significant. Beyond the statistically significant nature of this relationship, the connection between being bullied at school and being a cyberbully at college was not revealed by the findings and there was no other research literature with which to compare this finding or to explain this relationship. However, this association would be an interesting one to explore in more detail in future research.

Victims of offline bullying at school may become so frustrated with being targeted that they ultimately become cyberbullies at college as a way of getting revenge on those who bullied them at school or standing up for themselves by retaliating against those who target them at college. If this was the case, it is noteworthy that this was done through means of *cyber*bullying rather than physical bullying, which supports the notion that using technology avoids the need for physical strength in bullying others. However, what was not known was whether there was a causal link between the victims' experience at school and the cyberbullies' experiences at college. The two most popular reasons provided by cyberbullies who were also offline victims at school were 'anger' (62%) and 'revenge' (45%). Nonetheless, there was no direct evidence to support the connection between these relationships.

In any case, this finding does somewhat contradict the earlier finding that cybervictims at school were less likely to be cyberbullies at college, supporting the line of reasoning that they might not cyberbully others because they know what it is like to be a cybervictim. Having said this, the relationship considered here was different in that offline victims at school were more likely to be

cyberbullies at college. Therefore it may be the case that victims of offline bullying might not know what it is like to be *cyber*bullied and this therefore might reduce the changes of them bullying someone offline, but increase the chances of *cyber*bullying someone, because they may see targeting someone through technology as being less serious than offline bullying, which might have been physical in nature. However, this is speculation and further research is needed to understand this relationship.

Cybervictims

Finding: Those who were not offline victims at school were more likely to be cybervictims at college

Statistically significant: Yes

Three-quarters of those who reported being cybervictims reported not being victims of offline bullying at school. That is to say that those who were not bullied offline at school were disproportionately more likely to be victims of cyberbullying at college. This relationship was found to be statistically significant. Without the benefit of other findings or research literature to explain this relationship, it is difficult to examine the reasons why the same participants who reported not being offline victims at school were more likely to be cybervictims at college. Instead, by considering the finding in the alternative—that is, *those who were offline victims at school were less likely to be cybervictims at college*—the relationship may be speculatively explained, as follows. Those who reported being offline victims at school might have developed strategies to prevent them from becoming offline victims by the time they started college. That is to say, their experiences of being bullied at school might have helped them to avoid being

cyberbullied at college. In contrast, those who were not bullied at school would not have had the opportunity to develop strategies to protect or prevent them from being targeted at college, and so were more likely and exposed to being cyberbullied. However, this line of reasoning is speculative and was not investigated in this research. Furthermore, *offline bullying at school* was compared with *cyberbullying at school*, which may not be a simple and linear comparison between different types and contexts of victimisation. Clearly more research is needed to investigate and understand this relationship, not least because the different relationships between bullying and cyberbullying in schools and colleges have not featured in any other research considered in the literature review. Researching such relationships is important because they may be able to highlight the connections between being a cyberbully and being a bully, or between being a cybervictim and being a victim, either in school or in college, or both.

5.3.7 Ethnic Origin

Cyberbullies

Finding: Those who were White Other and 'Other' ethnicities were more likely to be cyberbullies

Statistically significant: Yes

Three-quarters of those who reported being cyberbullies were White, although this was proportional to the number of White participants in the sample. The findings in relation to ethnicity show that participants who selected their ethnic origin as Asian, Black or Mixed were proportionally less involved in cyberbullying others, whilst those who selected their ethnic origin as White Other or 'Other' were

disproportionately more likely to report being cyberbullies at college. The relationship between ethnicity and being a cyberbully was statistically significant. However, given that there were 93 cyberbullies and 69 of these reported themselves to be White, the absolute numbers for ethnicities of cyberbullies who were not White were small. Moreover, within the category of 'Other', selected by five cyberbullies, only two provided details of their ethnic origin (Arab and Spanish). Cyberbullies within the White Other category were found to be Irish, Traveller or Roma Gypsy.

There was no research literature identified that considered the relationship between ethnicity and being a cyberbully. The small amount of research that was identified related to being a cybervictim, which is considered below. More research is needed to investigate the relationship between ethnicity and cyberbullying others, especially since only seven cyberbullies who reported their ethnicity as White Other or 'Other' responded to the question relating to the reasons for cyberbullying others. This resulted in the findings pertaining to these reasons being skewed and the analysis of such would be misleading without in-depth descriptions from these cyberbullies to put their responses into context.

Cybervictims

Finding: Those who were White, White Other and 'Other' ethnicities were more likely to be cybervictims

Statistically significant: No

Four out of five cybervictims were White, which was more than expected compared to the number of White participants in the sample. Higher than expected rates of being a cybervictim were also found for those who were of White Other

and ‘Other’ ethnicities, who, along with White students, were found to be disproportionately more likely to be cybervictims. However, unlike the relationship with being a cyberbully, the relationship between ethnicity and being a cybervictim was not statistically significant. The cybervictims from the White Other category were found to be Irish, Traveller or Roma Gypsy, which was similar to those who reported being cyberbullies. Of the five cybervictims from the ‘Other’ ethnicities, two were Persian, and one each was Belgian, Hungarian, and East African/Asian.

The relationship between ethnicity and being a cybervictim has not been considered to a large extent in the literature, with Bauman (2010, p.807) stating that ethnicity was ‘essentially unexamined’ in the cyberbullying research literature. In the research that has considered ethnicity in being a cybervictim, non-White and White non-British ethnic groups (including Asian, Black, Mixed, Chinese, White Irish and White Other ethnicities) were more likely to be cybervictims than were White British participants (Cross *et al*, 2009). However, the researchers in Cross *et al.* (ibid) did not gather the reasons why these particular ethnic groups were cyberbullied; the reasons may have included their ethnicity in some cases, but this was not known. Similarly, Li (2005) found that non-White participants in their research were more likely to be cyberbullied compared to White participants. However, the relationship between ethnicity and cyberbullying may depend on location and context, as the experience of the following cybervictim illustrates:

> *I was sexually harassed due to being the only girl in my class. I was the only white British person, and the rest were Muslim and Asian and spoke about me in their own language*. (Girl cybervictim, 18, White)

It is important to remember that White students were also statistically more likely to be cybervictims as well as White Other and 'Other', but the fact that the majority of participants in this study were White might have skewed this relationship. Lucy reported being targeted because she was born in Germany: she was called 'Hitler's daughter', which is an example of racist bullying. Being cyberbullied because of their ethnicity was reported by 80% of those with 'Other' ethnicity, but the absolute number in this category who provided reasons was only ten cybervictims. The percentages of cybervictims who reported being cyberbullied because of their ethnicity were less skewed compared to cyberbullies, owing to the higher number of cybervictims compared to cyberbullies: 'Other' Ethnicity (80%), White Other (50%), Asian (31%), Mixed (13%), White (4%), and Black (0%). However, numbers for those other than White cybervictims were relatively small and so caution is needed when interpreting these figures. In any case, across all categories of ethnicity, the cybervictim's ethnic origin was not the most reported reason for being cyberbullied; instead these were found to be 'physical appearance', 'friendship groups' and 'family'. The details for being cyberbullied for these wider reasons, as well as their ethnicity, were not investigated in depth, and as such, future research should consider in more detail the relationship between ethnicity and being a cybervictim.

5.3.8 Physical Disability

Cyberbullies

Finding: No disproportional relationship

Statistically significant: No relationship

A total of 2.4% of cyberbullies reported having a disability, which was proportional to the number of participants in the sample reporting that they had a physical disability. Therefore, participants with disabilities were not more or less involved in cyberbullying others than participants without physical disabilities. However, since this research was mostly carried out in mainstream colleges, the number of participants without physical disabilities was relatively low. Research that relates to physically disabled learners' involvement in bullying or cyberbullying others is especially lacking in the wider literature. The two cyberbullies with a physical disability both selected 'fun', 'provocation' and 'power/status' as reasons for their behaviour, but more research is needed to investigate this relationship further, given the unrepresentative nature of the population in relation to physical disability. Future research should encourage participation from more educational institutions that provide services to physically disabled students so that data gathered represents the views and experiences of more students in non-mainstream education. Only two 'special colleges'—that predominantly cater for students for whom mainstream education is not appropriate or accessible because of students' physical or learning difficulties—participated in this study, with a total of 15 participants. That said, the nature of the cyberbullies' physical disabilities was not known: therefore, future research should consider, in a sensible and ethnical manner, the nature of the physical disability participants have.

Cybervictims

Finding: Those with physical disabilities were more likely to be cybervictims

Statistically significant: Yes

In contrast to there being no relationship found between those reporting that they had a physical disability and being a cyberbully, those with a physical disability were disproportionately more likely to be cyberbullied than those without a physical disability. Of the 15 cybervictims with a physical disability who provided reasons for being cyberbullied, 40% indicated that they were cyberbullied because of their physical disability. However, this was not the most common reason selected: 80% were cyberbullied because of their friendship groups and 73% because of their physical appearance.

The range of physical disabilities a person can have is broad and the details of the physical disabilities participants reported were not collected in this research. It is possible that a physical disability may be unnoticeable or hidden to others and therefore the reason for being cyberbullied might not be connected to a person's physical disability, but for other reasons, which was the case with 60% of the 15 cybervictims with physical disabilities who provided reasons for being cyberbullied.

Roekel *et al*. (2010) recognised that little research on bullying or cyberbullying has been carried out in mainstream education contexts. This is despite a perceived heightened risk of disabled people being targeted because of an apparent weakness, which might give rise to an imbalance of power. However, this might not be the case if those with physical disabilities are using technology anonymously. More research is needed in both mainstream and special education settings to understand the experiences of students with physical disabilities and how they relate to cyberbullying.

5.3.9 Asperger's syndrome/Autism

Cyberbullies

Finding: Those with Asperger's syndrome/autism were more likely to be cyberbullies

Statistically significant: No

In total, 5.9% of cyberbullies reported having Asperger's syndrome/autism, which compares to 2.9% of participants in the sample who reported having Asperger's syndrome/autism. This shows that those with Asperger's syndrome/autism were disproportionately more likely to be cyberbullies, but the difference was not great enough for the relationship to be statistically significant. Roekel *et al.* (2010) found that those with autism were at higher risk of being a bully, suggesting limits in social processing and heightened aggressive behaviours as reasons for this. Roekel *et al.* (ibid) explained that those with autism might not be able to perceive or be aware that their behaviour was bullying. It followed that the teachers in their research perceived higher levels of bullying behaviour in those with autism. This might mean that those with Asperger's syndrome/autism in this research might have not reported that they were involved in cyberbullying others if they did not consider their behaviour as cyberbullying. Had the teachers of these students been given the opportunity to provide details of their perceptions, the results might have been higher, as in Roekel *et al*. (2010). However, this might also have been the case if teachers of students generally (with or without Asperger's/autism) were provided with the opportunity to give their perceptions of whether they were cyberbullies. This is because the perceptions of teachers and students could be

different in terms of what 'counts' as cyberbullying behaviours. Furthermore, this perception can differ *between* teachers and *between* students.

The perspectives of others, such as teachers, are important to take into account, especially if students are vulnerable and cannot properly perceive for themselves, and/or are in danger of being harmed or *are* being harmed. However, it is arguably even more important to allow the voices of participants to be heard, given their own perspectives, perceptions and understanding according to their own experiences and notion of reality. What is perceived to be the reality of one person (a teacher) might not be perceived to be the reality of another (the students), despite whether or not the student has Asperger's syndrome/autism, or any another condition, or no condition. It is the voices of participants that are important and this has been the guiding philosophy of this research. Unfortunately, none of the four cyberbullies who reported having Asperger's syndrome/autism provided details of their reasons for cyberbullying others, thereby adding to the need for future research to examine this relationship in more detail.

Cybervictims

Finding: Those with Asperger's syndrome/autism were more likely to be cybervictims

Statistically significant: Yes

A total of 6.3% of cybervictims reported having Asperger's syndrome/autism, which was more than expected, given that only 2.4% of the sample had Asperger's syndrome/autism. This shows that those with Asperger's syndrome/autism were disproportionately more likely to have been cyberbullied,

and unlike the relationship with being a cyberbully, this relationship was statistically significant. The research of Roekel *et al.* (2010) also included bully victims; they found that pupils with autism perceived themselves to be victims of bullying less than their teachers. Again, as above with cyberbullies, this could mean that there was an under-reporting of being cyberbullied in this research, as students with Asperger's syndrome/autism might not have considered the behaviour of someone else to be cyberbullying. However, despite this, participants with Asperger's syndrome/autism were more likely to be cyberbullied and so sufficient reporting was made: enough for this relationship to be statistically significant.

Of the 16 cybervictims who reported having Asperger's syndrome/autism who provided reasons for being cyberbullied, the most common reason selected was 'physical appearance' (63%), followed by 'learning disability' and 'intelligence/ability', each of which was selected by 56% of cybervictims. The latter two reasons can be seen to be more connected to having Asperger's syndrome/autism than physical appearance, and therefore suggest that those having Asperger's syndrome/autism are being targeted for this reason. However, apart from research by Roekel *et al*. (2010), the wider literature on bullying and cyberbullying seems not to focus on those with Asperger's syndrome/autism and therefore more research is needed to understand the relationship between Asperger's syndrome/autism and experiences of being cyberbullied and cyberbullying others.

5.3.10 Dyslexia/Difficulties with Literacy or Numeracy (DDLN)

Cyberbullies

Finding: Those who had DDLN were more likely to be cyberbullies

Statistically significant: Yes

One-fifth of cyberbullies reported having DDLN, which was more than expected given that less than one in ten participants in the sample reported having DDLN. This shows that those with DDLN were disproportionately more likely to report being cyberbullies, and this relationship was statistically significant. The reasons that cyberbullies who had DDLN gave for their behaviour included 'anger' (54%) and 'fun' (46%), and related to their cybervictims' friendship groups or intelligence/ability (46%), and their gender (38%). However, these reasons were based on the responses provided by only 13 cyberbullies with DDLN. Furthermore, there was no wider literature identified with which to compare this finding or explain this relationship, which highlights the need for more research in this area to investigate and understand the relationship between having DDLN and being a cyberbully.

Cybervictims

Finding: Those who had DDLN were more likely to be cybervictims

Statistically significant: Yes

Similar to the rate of those who were cyberbullies, almost one in five cybervictims reported having DDLN (17.8%). Again, this was higher than the 9.1% of the sample who reported having DDLN and therefore shows that those with DDLN were disproportionately more likely to report being cybervictims. As with being a

cyberbully, the same statistically significant relationship was found between being a cybervictim and having DDLN. A total of 50 cybervictims with DDLN provided reasons for being cyberbullied, the most frequently cited of which were 'physical appearance' (82%) and 'friendship groups' (70%). A lower percentage of cybervictims were targeted because of their learning disability (38%). However, it is important not to concentrate on the most prevalent reasons, as the voices of the minority could be lost. For example, one cybervictim who had dyslexia explained her experience of cyberbullies as follows:

> *with my dislexia* (sic) *I was called disabled spacker and was allways* (sic) *looking for atenshion* (sic)*. So I shut myself away and it's something I will regret for the rest of my life. I starved myself and in the end I passed out in college without knowing, and I endid* (sic) *up going in and out of hospital.* (Girl cybervictim, 16, White)

Being cyberbullied because of learning difficulties might create stigma around not wanting to disclose or be diagnosed with DDLN and might limit the help and support that students can receive if they are worried about being targeted because of this. No wider literature was identified with which to compare this finding or explain this relationship, which highlights the need for more research in this area to investigate and understand the relationship between having DDLN and being a cybervictim.

5.3.11 Sexual Orientation

Cyberbullies

Finding: Those who were bisexual, homosexual and 'Other' sexual orientation were more likely to be cyberbullies.

Statistically significant: Yes

Four out of five cyberbullies reported being heterosexual, which was proportional to the sample demographic for sexual orientation. Those who reported being bisexual, homosexual or having 'Other' sexual orientations were found to be disproportionately more involved in being cyberbullies, since a higher rate reported being a cyberbully compared to the sample demographics for their sexual orientation. The cyberbullies who selected their sexual orientation as 'Other' were all boys, who wrote: 'How am I meant to know at this young age of 17?', 'I am 90% straight' and 'Unknown'. Although the relationship between sexual orientation and being a cyberbully was statistically significant, the absolute numbers for those who were bisexual, homosexual and 'Other' sexual orientations were small (n=20), given that 73 out of the 93 cyberbullies were heterosexual, thus warranting caution in their interpretation. The most common reasons selected for cyberbullying others across those of all types of sexual orientation were 'physical appearance' and 'intelligence/ability', but the numbers on which these were based were small. Overall, between 20-25% of cyberbullies across the different categories of sexual orientation targeted others because of their sexual orientation. There was no research with which to compare this finding or to explain this relationship. Therefore, more research is needed on how being a cyberbully relates to sexual orientation to better understand this relationship.

Cybervictims

Finding: Those who were bisexual, homosexual and 'Other' sexual orientation were more likely to be cybervictims.

Statistically significant: Yes

As with being a cyberbully, the majority of cybervictims reported being heterosexual (75.7%). This was proportionately less compared to the sample demographics of sexual orientation. This was in contrast to the rates for participants who reported being cybervictims who were bisexual, homosexual or had 'Other' sexual orientations. The sexual orientations of the nine cybervictims who selected their sexual orientation as 'Other' were 'asexual' (n=4) and one each for 'pansexual', 'bi-curious', 'unsure', 'demi-sexual' and 'hetero-flexible'. Similar to the relationship with being a cyberbully, the relationship between being a cybervictim and sexual orientation was statistically significant, with those who reported being bisexual, homosexual and having 'Other' sexual orientations being disproportionately more likely to be cybervictims.

The two most common reasons for being cyberbullied across those who reported being bisexual, heterosexual and 'other' sexual orientations were 'physical appearance' and 'friendship groups', and for those who reported being homosexual were 'physical appearance' and 'sexual orientation'. The percentage of cybervictims targeted specifically because of their sexual orientation was as follows: homosexual—79%, 'other' sexual orientation—73%, bisexual—79%, and heterosexual—8%. These percentages show that the majority of cybervictims who were not heterosexual were cyberbullied because of their sexual orientation.

David was targeted because he was bisexual, but his experiences of homophobic bullying were not investigated deeply during his interview; this was a missed opportunity to collect rich data in relation to homophobic bullying. The discriminatory nature of homophobic cyberbullying warrants further investigation, not least because it has been found to be statistically significant in this research,

but also highly prevalent in wider research on bullying and cyberbullying: see, for example, Rivers and Cowie (2006) and Guasp (2012), who respectively found that 82% of LBG participants had been called names and 55% of LGBT participants had been bullied because of their sexual orientation.

5.3.12 Financial Assistance

Cyberbullies

Finding: No disproportional relationship

Statistically significant: No relationship

One-fifth of cyberbullies reporting receiving financial assistance at college: this was in proportion to the number of participants in the sample who received financial assistance. Therefore, cyberbullies receiving financial assistance were no more or less likely to cyberbully others than those who did not receive financial assistance. The most common reasons reported by those who received financial assistance for cyberbullying others were 'anger' (46%), 'boredom' (46%) and for 'fun' (38%) (Appendix L.3) No research literature was identified with which to compare this finding, highlighting the need for more research to investigate and understand the relationship between receipt of financial assistance and cyberbullying others.

Cybervictims

Finding: Those who received financial assistance were more likely to be cybervictims

Statistically significant: No

One-quarter of cybervictims reported receiving financial assistance as college students. This compared to a lower rate of one-fifth of participants in the sample overall, and therefore shows that participants who received financial assistance were disproportionately more likely to be cybervictims. However, this relationship was not statistically significant. There is a dearth of research into how individuals' economic status or whether they receive financial assistance is related to being a cyberbully or a cybervictim. The reasons most selected by those who received financial assistance for being cyberbullied were 'physical appearance' (72%), 'friendship groups' (56%) and 'family' (45%). Although these reasons do not relate directly to receiving financial assistance, cybervictims chose reasons from a predetermined list of options, which might have constrained their responses. More research is needed to investigate this relationship, including whether a person's financial circumstances had anything to do with cyberbullying others or being cyberbullied and the nature of the financial assistance that they received.

5.3.13 Criminal Activity

Cyberbullies

Finding: Those involved in criminal activity were more likely to be cyberbullies

Statistically significant: Yes

One quarter of cyberbullies reported that they had been engaged in criminal activity, which was higher than expected, given that only one in twenty participants in the sample reported being involved in criminal activity. Therefore, those who were engaged in criminal activity were disproportionately more likely to be cyberbullies, and this relationship was statistically significant. It is not

known from the findings whether engaging in criminal activity came before or after cyberbullying others, or whether they were connected beyond the statistically significant relationship. Farrington et al (2012) found from a meta-analyses of 15 studies that there was a strong relationship between bullying others and offending in later life: the risk of offending increased by around half. However, this study considered bullying and not cyberbullying and the bullying came first rather than the offending; the order was not known in this study. Nonetheless, Farrington et al (ibid) is a useful study to inform the consequences of bullying behaviour on being a risk factor to later offending.

It might be plausible to suggest that cyberbullies engage in a range of deviant behaviours, which might include cyberbullying behaviours. This can be seen to be connected to moral disengagement, in that feelings such as guilt are not activated so that there is an increased likelihood of engaging in deviant behaviour (Bandura, 1986). This line of reasoning makes more sense in light of the finding that 68% of cyberbullies who engaged in criminal activity cited 'fun' as a reason for cyberbullying others. Furthermore, on closer analysis of the findings, of the twenty cyberbullies who reported being involved in criminal activity, who provided a response to the question asking them whether they had felt remorse for what they had done, seventeen (85%) indicated that they did not feel remorse for their behaviour. This finding might indicate moral disengagement, but this relationship has not been considered in detail and, in any case, the nature of the criminal activity in which cyberbullies had been engaged was not known.

There is certainly more scope for research to investigate the wider behaviour of cyberbullies outside cyberbullying contexts; doing so might further inform the

reasons and consequences for cyberbullying behaviours. This is especially true since the only research to have considered criminal activity has been in adulthood in the context of long-term effects of being a bully, as discussed later in the chapter.

Cybervictims

Finding: Those not involved in criminal activity were more likely to be cybervictims

Statistically significant: Yes

In total, 8.7% of cybervictims reported being engaged in criminal activity, which was less than expected. There were more cybervictims than expected in the category of not engaging in criminal activity: therefore, those not engaged in criminal activity were disproportionately more involved in being cybervictims, and this relationship was found to be statistically significant. This relationship is interesting, not least because cyberbullies were more engaged in criminal activity and cybervictims were less engaged in criminal activity, but because if the finding is considered in the alternative—that is, *those involved in criminal activity were less likely to be cybervictims*—then this might suggest that engaging in criminal activity can be a protective factor against being cyberbullied. This then implies that not engaging in criminal activity can be a risk factor, thus making people more vulnerable to being cyberbullied. However, it is naïve to suggest that such a relationship is a linear one, although there may be a plausible link between relatively good behaviour and the risk of being targeted. There was no research identified that enabled comparison with this relationship or its explanation: thus, more research is needed to understand this relationship in greater detail.

5.3.14 Summary of Demographic Groups Disproportionately Involved in Cyberbullying

The table below summarises the findings regarding the demographic groups that were found to be disproportionately involved in cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied and whether this relationship was statistically significant.

Table 50: Demographic groups found to be disproportionately involved in cyberbullying

Variable	Cybervictim		Cyberbully	
	Disproportionate Involvement	Stat Sig	Disproportionate Involvement	Stat Sig
Gender	Girls	Yes	Boys	Yes
Age	18, 19	No	19	No
College cyberbully (cybervictim)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Offline victim at college	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cybervictim at school	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Offline victim at school	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity	White, White Other, Other	No	White Other, Other	Yes
Physical disability	Yes	Yes	No relationship	No
Autism/Asperger's	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Dyslexia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sexual orientation	Bisexual, Homosexual, Other	Yes	Bisexual, Homosexual, Other	Yes
Financial assistance	Yes	Yes	No relationship	No
Criminal activity	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

This information could potentially be used to create a profile of a cyberbully and a cybervictim, but this should be avoided due to the complexities of cyberbullying as a behavioural and social phenomenon. In any case, the creation of such profiles was not the intention of this research. What has emerged from these findings is that certain groups were more likely to be cyberbullies or to be cyberbullied, and these individual characteristics may be risk factors, whilst some other groups were less likely to be cyberbullies or be cyberbullied, which may be protective factors. Although it was not the intention of this research to consider such risk and

protective factors, these findings have created the opportunity for research to be carried out in this area. Research with such focus can lead to an understanding of whether any demographic groups of students with particular characteristics are more or less likely to be involved in cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied, which in turn can be used in practice in identifying those most at risk of being cyberbullies or cybervictims. This might help colleges to target resources and guidance at particular groups. However, the risk is that identifying such groups—for example, 'boys being cyberbullies'—can lead to labelling, be misleading, and lead to colleges focussing efforts on certain groups at the risk of not providing services for all students. Therefore, researchers must be mindful that findings such as 'boys are more involved than girls in cyberbullying others' need to be understood in the context of what happened and why, as well as the wider circumstances in which the cyberbullying took place, as communicating findings in a narrow and closed way can also be misleading and lead to labelling. Therefore, researchers should investigate cyberbullying in a holistic manner so that the involvement of different groups in cyberbullying can be understood more in context. This is important if cyberbullying research is to advance in terms of developing an understanding of *who* is involved in cyberbullying others and being cyberbullies, together with the reasons *why*.

This research has revealed many relationships that exist between different groups of students and their involvement in being cyberbullies or cybervictims, but since many of these relationships are ill-considered in the wider research literature, and especially amongst this age group, more research needs to be done. Given the

relatively under-researched nature of colleges as a context for investigating cyberbullying, it is even more important that further research is conducted in colleges so that such findings can be more reliably compared and to find out more. In considering the demographic groups above, there was some discussion as to the reasons why particular groups were targeted. The findings in relation to why students were cyberbullied and why they cyberbullied others are now considered.

5.4 What reasons do students in colleges give for cyberbullying others and for being cyberbullied?

The reasons for cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied are discussed in this section by using the findings from the questionnaire and case studies, as well as reference to the wider research literature, and framing what has been found by using attribution theory. As indicated in the last section, the reasons why each demographic group is engaged in cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied are considered briefly, rather than in depth, as this was not intended in the scope of the research and therefore the research instruments were not designed to specifically collect such data, which would have limited the analysis. However, reference to Appendix L, which contains this information, is encouraged throughout the reading of this section.

5.4.1 Reasons and Motivations for Cyberbullying Others

Cyberbullies were asked to choose the characteristics of their victims that were part of the reason why they cyberbullied them. The three most prevalent responses related to the 'intelligence/ability' (40%), 'friendship groups' (36.9%) and

'physical appearance' (29.2%) of those that they cyberbullied. The highlighted percentages in Appendix L.1—which represent the most prevalent figures for each demographic—clearly show that the same three reasons were selected by nearly all of the different demographic groups considered in this research.

There were also other reasons reported for cyberbullying others: around one in five cyberbullies each selected reasons relating to the sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, physical disability, and gender of the victims, which are all discriminatory in nature. Reasons relating to the victims' family (21.5%) and learning disability (13.8%) were also chosen by cyberbullies. The full range of options provided to choose from were selected by cyberbullies, showing the variety of reasons for cyberbullying others. These reasons selected were all external attributions, since they relate to the victim or the victim's social environment. However, the question was designed in this way to investigate the different reasons that related to the cybervictim that formed part of the reasons for cyberbullying behaviours. There was no opportunity for cyberbullies to add their own responses to this question, other than to select from those already prescribed. This was a limitation to the data collection for this question, which may have restricted the gathering of the voices of cyberbullies, which have not featured relatively highly in this research.

A further question was asked that related more to non-demographic characteristics of the victim in an effort to gather cyberbullies' own personal traits and feelings as reasons for their behaviour. This question did allow cyberbullies to give their own responses in addition to the range of choices prescribed. All of the possible response options to this question were selected by the cyberbullies, highlighting

the range of reasons why they targeted their victims. These reasons were categorised into internal and external attributions, as follows:

Table 51: Reasons for cyberbullying others categorised as internal and external attributions

Internal	%	External	%
Anger	50.0	Provocation	29.2
For fun	41.7	Others/friends were doing it	13.9
Revenge	38.9	To fit in	11.1
Boredom	29.2	Because of how the person was different	9.7
Jealousy	18.1	No-one would know it was me	9.7
Power/status	18.1	Upbringing/bad childhood/parenting	5.6
Insecurity	11.1		

The data in the table show that the three most prevalent reasons for cyberbullying others were 'anger', 'for fun' and 'revenge'. Appendix L.2 provides more detail by demographic group—the three most popular reasons selected by cyberbullies are highlighted in yellow. These three reasons are all internal attributions, which indicate that cyberbullies made more attributions to their own disposition and fewer attributions, in comparison, to their external environment. This might suggest that cyberbullies recognised that the *cause* of their behaviour was their own temperament, which is positive because by recognising that the *blame* for their behaviour is attributable to themselves, they may be more willing and able to change their behaviour in the future (Hogg and Vaughn, 2011).

However, it was evident from the findings that cyberbullies provided multiple reasons for their behaviour: in total there were 239 responses by 75 cyberbullies, which indicates, on average, that cyberbullies provided three to four different reasons for their behaviour, which in most cases were a combination of both internal and external attributions. These multiple and varied reasons and

attributions cited by cyberbullies highlight the interconnectedness, complexity and variations of cyberbullying behaviours and situations.

Some cyberbullies made reference to engaging in cyberbullying as a means of protecting someone else, such as the two cyberbullies below:

> *to stop them bullying another person* (Boy cyberbully, 18, White British)

> *Retaliated to those who bullied me.* (Girl cyberbully, 17, Mixed – Black and White)

These reasons can be seen as *reactive*, as opposed to *proactive*, since there was a prior cause for the behaviour of these two cyberbullies (Wingate *et al.* 2013). The distinction between reactive and proactive reasons can be seen more generally from the responses provided by cyberbullies in the questionnaire: for example, 'revenge' and 'provocation' can be seen as reactive reasons for cyberbullying others, whereas 'boredom' and for 'fun' are proactive reasons for engaging in cyberbullying. By comparing these proactive and reactive behaviours, differences in the motivations for cyberbullying others are identified: for example, there is a contrast between those who cyberbullied others for revenge and those who did it for fun/as a joke, perhaps seen with the intention to do harm, despite both being internal attributions. Cross *et al.* (2009) reported that 41% of cyberbullies in their research cyberbullied others for revenge/retaliation, and 40% cyberbullied others as a joke, which were the most prevalent reasons reported by cyberbullies in both their 2009 and 2012 research. Similar rates were found for 'revenge' (38.9%) and 'for fun' (41.7%) in this research.

The two quotes below from boy cyberbullies show the context in which cyberbullying behaviour has been reported as 'a joke':

> *To me it's just having a bit of a laugh and I thought they would take it as a laugh, which sometimes they do. But for all I know they could be putting on a face to try and not look bothered* (Boy cyberbully, 18, White British)

> *I dunno* (sic), *friends have jokes with one another, whther* (sic) *online or offline. If a joke goes 'too far' then everyone suddenly labels it bullying nowadays, don't know why*. (Boy cyberbully, 18, White British)

The nature of the reasons for cyberbullying others in these quotes can be seen to relate to the meaning of the term Shakespeare gave to 'bullying', which was playful teasing between friends. Nonetheless, the two boys above reported being *cyberbullies*, suggesting that they recognised their behaviour as something more than a joke. According to the wider research literature, a person should intend to cause harm to another person; where there is a lack of intent to hurt someone—or lack of power imbalance or repetition—then this may be *banter* instead of *bullying* (DCSF, 2009). However, this is the case when all involved consider it to be fun; but if the behaviour instead causes someone to be upset, then this may be bullying and not banter. Shariff (2008) suggested that playful teasing could escalate into bullying when a power imbalance is created; howsoever caused, this power imbalance might not be clear, which might go some way to explain why cases of bullying/cyberbullying are not obvious to everyone. It also depends on the perspective of those involved; in the first of the two quotes, the cyberbully recognised that *he* was having a laugh but that *the other person* might have been putting on a brave face. The second of the two quotes highlighted the need to investigate the construction of cyberbullying from the views of cyberbullies, cybervictims and teenagers generally, given the lack of clarity in what is meant by cyberbullying (*everyone suddenly labels it bullying nowadays, don't know why)*, even from those who reported being cyberbullies.

Some cyberbullies, such as those above, saw their behaviour as *banter* (having a joke) and may not have intended to cause harm to anyone. This mentality needs to be distinguished from other cyberbullies who did intend to cause harm to their victim(s). However, in any case, the cyberbully might not know if any harm was caused to the cybervictim, perhaps because they cannot physically see the person receiving the content because of the nature of technology. In this way, the *inadvertent* cyberbully, who does not intend to harm or did not foresee harm being caused to the victim, needs to be distinguished from, for example, the *power-hungry* cyberbully, who does intend to cause harm to his or her victim by intimidation and making threats (Aftab, 2006). Therefore, those cyberbullies in this research who reported cyberbullying for 'fun' (41.7%) *might* be seen to be inadvertent cyberbullies, and those who reported cyberbullying others for power/status/popularity (18.1%) *might* be seen as power-hungry cyberbullies, in which case there is a clear contrast with wanting or intending to cause harm. However, this assertion relies on the assumption that those who cyberbully others for 'fun' do not intend to cause harm and those who cyberbully others for power/status/popularity want to cause harm, which was not investigated. In hindsight, it would have been beneficial to include a question for cyberbullies in relation to the notion of intent, such as 'Did you intend to cause your victim harm?' This would have provided data to enhance discussion in this area.

The open responses provided by cyberbullies resulted in two key themes that related to the reasons for cyberbullying others: 'retaliation' and 'fitting in'. *Retaliation* included confronting someone who had targeted them, or had targeted another person and thus deserved to be cyberbullied, with some cyberbullies

stating that they would not have cyberbullied others if they had not been somehow provoked. This is illustrated in the following quote from a girl cyberbully:

> *If someone is polite to me, I am polite to them. If they're rude to me, I'll retaliate with what I think of them. If they're an idiot, call a spade a spade. I won't start a fight, but I will retaliate to provocation. But, again, that's your definition. I call it arguing. I wouldn't class it as cyberbullying.* (Girl cyberbully, 17, White)

Within the *fitting in* theme, it was found that cyberbullies—who were mostly girls—targeted their victims as part of a group, as a way of having fun and amusing themselves. Since the nature of the behaviour of many cyberbullies was reported to involve commenting on victims' photos and videos through Facebook, Twitter and Ask.FM, it can be seen how easy it is for people to join in with further hurtful comments, even if that is not what they intended to do.

There is the possibility that cyberbullies made *fundamental attribution errors* (Weiner, 1985) in perceiving and understanding their reasons for cyberbullying others. Cyberbullies might have attributed the *cause* of their behaviour to others rather than to themselves—that is, making an external attribution rather than an internal attribution—or vice versa. In cases where a fundamental attribution error is made, blame is misplaced, which can affect the extent to which cyberbullies understand, or are able to understand, their own behaviour and how to change it. Furthermore, cyberbullies who attributed the cause to their external environment, or to other people, may be morally disengaged because they may be seen not to take responsibility for their own behaviour. However, in the cases where cyberbullies reported being provoked by someone else (an external attribution) as the cause for their behaviour, this attribution can be seen to be correct. In this way, it is clear why a cyberbully attributes their behaviour to both internal and

external causes. However, where a cyberbully attributes the cause of their behaviour, for example, to the fact that the person they cyberbullied was Muslim (an external attribution), then the cyberbully does not recognise their prejudicial and racist disposition as the cause of their behaviour (internal attribution), and therefore there is a fundamental attribution error.

The voices of cyberbullies are important in understanding the reasons and motivations for cyberbullying others, so that cyberbullying as a phenomenon can be understood as a whole. Whether cyberbullies make an internal or external attribution, or both, it is still the behaviour of the cyberbully that has to change. This is the case regardless of whether the attributions made were correct, whether there is a fundamental attribution error, or whether the cyberbully reports not knowing (or not understanding or being able to articulate their reasons) the reasons for cyberbullying others. The cyberbully's perception of their own behaviour is important to consider, as this is the starting point for change, including change that aligns the cyberbully's understanding of the behaviour to making correct attributions.

Colleges are ideally placed to offer help and support to cyberbullies, howsoever identified, in order that they can understand their own behaviours, and in terms of those who have been provoked, the behaviour of others. Colleges can (and perhaps do) provide this help and support in the form of counselling and other pastoral systems, but the aim of these should be to raise awareness of cyberbullying, explaining why people cyberbully others, and, importantly, how to change their behaviour (Blandford, 2015b). It is also possible that cyberbullies do not know, do not properly understand, or are unable to articulate the reasons why

they cyberbully others; this was the case for 12.5% of cyberbullies in this research, who reported not knowing their reasons for cyberbullying others. For cyberbullies who are not able to identify or articulate the reason or attribution for their behaviour, the development of resources that raise awareness and the provision of support staff/counselling in colleges could help them to understand their behaviour. Whether or not the reason for cyberbullying others is known, the main point is that there must be provision of knowledgeable and trained staff in colleges who are able to understand the behaviours of students in relation to cyberbullying and be able to help students to understand their own behaviour and the behaviour of others, so that they can change their behaviour, stop cyberbullying others and instead treat people using technology properly and with respect. This requires investment in terms of time and money, and monitoring in terms of impact, but since colleges have been somewhat neglected in terms of research and attention from government regarding consideration of this age group and context, this would be a real step forward in making improvement to provision in colleges.

Reasons and Motivations for Being Cyberbullied

The voices of cybervictims in the wider research literature were virtually unheard when it came to the reasons for cyberbullying; much research focussed on the perspective and experiences of the cyberbully. Therefore, it is important that future research is designed to gather data from victims in relation to the *reasons* why they are cyberbullied: such information can contribute to understanding of cyberbullying as a whole from the perspective of those who experience it as victims.

The most common reason reported for being cyberbullied related to 'physical appearance', which was selected by two-thirds of cybervictims. This was also the most reported reason in Ditch the Label (2014), selected by 40% of victims. Over half of cybervictims selected their 'friendship groups' and a third of cybervictims cited their 'intelligence/ability' as reasons for being cyberbullied. The other reasons reported for being cyberbullied were: family (27.6%), sexual orientation (20.3%), gender (13.8%), religion (12.3%), ethnicity (11.1%), learning disability (8.3%) and physical disability (5.6%). In total, there were 824 selections across these different reasons made by 324 cybervictims. This shows that cybervictims, on average, reported two to three different reasons for being cyberbullied: hence, cybervictims reported being cyberbullied for multiple reasons, which could have an impact on the consequences of being cyberbullied, as discussed later in this chapter. Apart from 'friendship groups' and 'family', which are external attributions, the other reasons selected were all internal attributions.

There was no option for cybervictims to add 'Other' reasons to their responses to the questions asking about the reasons why they were cyberbullied. Adding this option would have allowed participants to provide more of their own voice, rather than choosing from prescribed answers. The inclusion of this option could also have generated new categories and allowed for a wider range of reasons to be considered. Furthermore, options relating to the *actions* of the victim, rather than their characteristics, were not included, such as whether they had provoked their cyberbully or whether they had been a cyberbully themselves and had subsequently been targeted as a form of retaliation. In this way, the cyberbullying seems only proactive, without taking into account any reactive elements.

Therefore, the options provided can be viewed as being biased in favour of the cybervictims and against the cyberbully.

The table in Appendix L.1 shows the reasons for being cyberbullied by each demographic—the highlighted percentages represent the three most prevalent reasons for each demographic, which shows 'physical appearance', intelligence/ability', and 'friendship groups' as the main reasons for being cybervictims across nearly all of the demographics. These three reasons for being cyberbullied were also the most common three reasons reported by cyberbullies for cyberbullying others. Given that these three reasons were the most prevalent for both cyberbullies and cybervictims, this might be seen to increase the likelihood that the attributions made by cyberbullies for cyberbullying others and by cybervictims for being cyberbullied were correct.

The reasons for being cyberbullied show that cybervictims were targeted for personal aspects of their lives, such as their sexual orientation and ethnicity: aspects of their lives over which they have no control. Yet, in spite of their unchangeable traits, these were reasons why they were subjected to cyberbullying victimisation. Furthermore, many of these were also examples of discrimination: for example, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, religion, and disability, which were also identified in research by the DCSF (2010) and Li (2010). These particular reasons, along with the cybervictim's intelligence/ability, are types of internal attributions. The exceptions are for family and friends, which are examples of external attributions. It is significant to know why attributions are internal or external, as this can affect how cybervictims might feel about themselves: for example, if they feel a sense of self-blame. Such was the case in

Bauman and Pero (2010), who found that the deaf cybervictims in their sample blamed *themselves* for being cyberbullied for being deaf, rather than blaming the cyberbullies for their behaviour. Such attributions can lead to greater distress than providing external attributions, and an expectation that they will continue to be targeted for the same reasons.

The coded experiences of cybervictims who provided such comments—all of whom were girls—revealed that a common experience was comments being added to photos uploaded by themselves or others on Facebook or comments made on Twitter. This theme was seen to relate to the physical appearance of the cybervictim, since the comments made were mainly focussed on the looks, weight, and personal appearance of the cybervictim, and were often shared with other people who would also add similar comments. Some examples of cybervictims who provided details of their experiences of being cyberbullied about their physical appearance included:

> *Got called fat and ugly on my photos on Facebook* (Girl, cybervictim, 17, White British)
>
> *Uploaded a photo on Facebook that got slated by loads of people cus (sic) I think they are jealous* (Girl, cybervictim, 18, White British)
>
> *a bunch of girls just slagging off the way I dressed and that I just ended up takin* (sic) *then photos down cus* (sic) *I cudnt* (sic) *be bothered with it all* (Girl cybervictim, 18, White British)

A range of reasons for being targeted became apparent from the case studies, but all related to how the victim was different in some way. Similar to the experiences of these three girl cybervictims above, Katie, Laura and Angela were all cyberbullied because of their looks. Laura was also cyberbullied because she defended someone else who was being cyberbullied and Angela was also

cyberbullied because of her intelligence. This shows that these cybervictims were cyberbullied for multiple reasons. Lucy was racially abused because she was from Germany. David suffered homophobic abuse because of being bisexual. Sasha was targeted because of her learning difficulties, and because she was an easy target as she did not retaliate.

Similar to cyberbullies, cybervictims made reference to initial comments/content for being for a joke, using terms such as 'banter', 'fun' and 'jokes', until a comment was made that went too far, which then became nasty, aggressive or threatening. In many of these cases, the cyberbullying involved friends (or people thought to be their friends) who at first were joking with each other and then a fallout occurred when things went too far due to a hurtful or nasty comment being sent. Similar experiences were also reported in romantic relationships that had broken down through an argument. Upset with the relationship ending, it was mostly girls who would then harass their ex-partner (it was not clear in all cases whether this was a same-sex partner or not) and share private images and messages with other people because they were upset about the relationship ending, but sometimes boys would also do this to their partners, such as in the following experience:

> *I went through a breakup in October and have been harassed by my ex through to February including text, messages on social media and YouTube, disclosing personal information without my permission. (Girl, 17, White)*

It is possible that cybervictims—in the same way as cyberbullies considered above—can make attribution errors by misinterpreting the reason(s) why they have been cyberbullied. For example, if a cybervictim who reported being targeted because of their sexual orientation was in fact targeted because of their

intelligence/ability, then this would be an attribution error. However, the cybervictim might not know the reason why they are being targeted, and instead can only make an inference or perceive it to be something about themselves. In reality, it may be difficult for a cybervictim to identify and be sure of the *real* reason behind why they are cyberbullied, and it may never be known because the cyberbully does not make reference to it or hides their reason(s). This can cause the cybervictim to feel confused, anxious and self-conscious, and may add to the impact that the bullying has on them. On the other hand, the cyberbully may be very direct with the reason why they are targeting the cybervictim, which can also have a damaging effect on the way they think and feel about themselves.

Although attribution theory has been useful in categorising the different reasons for cyberbullying and being cyberbullied, there is still more to be done in an effort to get to the real depths of *why* people engage in bullying and cyberbullying behaviours; that is to say, some cyberbullies target their victims for power, but *why* do they need power? Similarly, cyberbullies target their victims because of their sexuality, race and/or family—but *why* is this? Is it because of ignorance, a lack of acceptance of others who are different, or because of their upbringing? Cyberbullies have been found to target their victims because they themselves are angry, but why are they angry? It was outside the scope of this research to consider such questions, but nonetheless they are important to raise and to research. Such research can help with understanding how bullying and cyberbullying behaviours are connected to other facets within a person's life, and further, to suggest ways of preventing and responding to behaviours such as cyberbullying. Furthermore, connecting the different groups that were more involved in cyberbullying than others (or different groups in general, regardless of

their disproportional engagement) to the reasons they give for being a cyberbully will help to bridge a gap in understanding how different groups are involved in cyberbullying.

5.5 What are the Consequences of Cyberbullying on Feelings, Learning and Social Integration for Cyberbullies and Cybervictims?

It was clear from the wider research literature that cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied could affect a person's ability to develop and maintain healthy relationships with people, affect their learning and the way they felt about themselves, and have a short-term and long-term impact in terms of physical and physiological health. The *intention* of the cyberbully might be to cause *harm* to the cybervictim, but the cybervictim might not be harmed. Conversely, the cyberbully might not intend to cause the cybervictim any harm—perhaps because they perceived their behaviour as a joke or banter—but nonetheless the cybervictim *is* harmed.

This section first considers the impact of being cyberbullied on cybervictims' psychological and emotional wellbeing, learning/academic performance, and social integration. The same three impacts are then discussed for cyberbullies.

5.5.1 Cybervictims

Psychological and Emotional Wellbeing

The most prevalent impact that cybervictims reported following their experience(s) of being cyberbullied was on their *feelings* (70.6%). The majority of cybervictims selected 'anger' (64%) as the most common feeling they experienced when they were cyberbullied. *Anger* was also the most common

attribution that cyberbullies made for cyberbullying others (50%). This relationship shows that cyberbullies engage in cyberbullying behaviour most often because of anger, the result of which makes the cybervictim feel angry, which in turn might lead these angry cybervictims to cyberbully others.

Cybervictims selected from the range of feelings provided in the questionnaire: a reminder of the responses is as follows. The majority of cybervictims reported feeling hurt (58.1%) and sad (54%); a large minority reported feelings depressed (44.7%); cybervictims also felt embarrassed (38.2%), anxious (37%), isolated (30.1%), self-blame (30.1%), and afraid (26.4%). Furthermore, a third of cybervictims reported having difficulty concentrating and three in ten did not want to go back to college, both of which can affect their learning at college. Given that there were 1,583 selections made by 322 cybervictims to this question item, this suggests that, on average, cybervictims reported feeling an average of five different feelings following their experiences of being cyberbullied. The coding of the open experiences of being cyberbullied in terms of consequences revealed that the most common feeling that cybervictims experienced following their experiences was 'upset', but other cybervictims felt angry, embarrassed and depressed.

Similar proportions of cybervictims reported feeling *suicidal* (25.5%) and *did not bother me at all* (22.4%), which may be seen as the two ends of the spectrum in terms of negative feelings. The same contrast was identified from the open responses cybervictims provided:

> *I wanted to kill myself* (Girl cybervictim, 16, White British)

> *Genuinely didn't care* (Boy cybervictim, 17, White British)

The way the cybervictim feels can depend on what happened. The questionnaire responses from the two cybervictims above were used to try to understand the cause and effect of being cyberbullied that resulted in such a contrast. The girl cybervictim reported being a victim of bullying and cyberbullying at school and at college and was cyberbullied inside and outside of college by people from college and from outside college. She reported not bullying or cyberbullying anyone. The girl's experience of being cyberbullied lasted for between six months and a year. She reported being cyberbullied for five reasons, which were 'physical appearance', 'intelligence/ability', 'gender' 'friendship groups' and 'family'. The girl described her experience as follows:

> *Outside of college I was told to go kill myself and end it all because I was fat useless and dumb who should give my parent some happiness and kill myself, I felt like killing myself my mom sat with me all night until I calmed down* (Girl cybervictim, 16, White British)

The boy cybervictim reported being a victim of bullying and cyberbullying at college and a cybervictim at secondary school. He also reported bullying and cyberbullying others at college. He reported not feeling any remorse for cyberbullying others. His experience of being cyberbullied was 'only a one-off and lasted a day'. The boy was cyberbullied by people outside of college and reported being cyberbullied for three reasons, which were 'friendship groups', 'family' and 'intelligence/ability'. The boy described his experience—which appeared earlier in this research—as follows:

> *I was probably a bit of a dick on the internet, a few people had a go at me and maybe took it too far. That is how it almost always is, the 'victim' has been being cocky, arrogant, or generally acting as if they are better in some way than the 'bully' (without knowing they've been being like this), then the 'bully' and various other people have often retliated* (sic) *in some verbal or internet type way, to which the 'vitim'* (sic) *is incredibly suprised*

> (sic) *and calls that mass retaliation to them just being a dick, 'cyberbullying.* (Boy cybervictim and cyberbully, 16, White)

By comparing these anecdotal experiences of the two cybervictims above, it is possible to identify a number of differences that *might* explain the outcome in terms of the way they felt. The girl reported being a victim and cybervictim at secondary school as well as at college and reported not being a bully/cyberbully, whereas the boy was a victim and cybervictim, as well as a cyberbully, at college, but was neither at school. The girl was cyberbullied for fewer reasons than the boy and her experiences lasted longer than the boy's. Furthermore, the boy did not feel remorse after cyberbullying others, which might suggest moral disengagement, and might also have led him not to experience any negative feelings after he himself was cyberbullied. The *experiences* provided by each cybervictim were also different; the girl might have been targeted *proactively* and perhaps did not fully understand why she was cyberbullied, but the boy seemed to appreciate that there was a *reactive* element to his experiences of being cyberbullied, which might have helped him to understand more why he became a cybervictim and therefore to be unaffected. However, this line of reasoning is narrow, based on only two experiences, and more research should be undertaken in terms of considering the minutiae of what leads to cybervictims being affected, or otherwise, by their experiences of cyberbullying.

The impacts of being cyberbullied might be determined by the nature, severity and frequency of the cyberbullying experiences, whether the victim suffered bullying offline as well as online bullying, and whether they blamed themselves for their experiences. Bauman and Pero (2010) found that victims who blamed themselves for being bullied suffered greater levels of distress and expected the bullying to

last longer, compared to those who did not attribute the cause of being bullied to themselves. For example, Angela was verbally bullied at college, and suffered both verbal and cyberbullying at school. This shows that it can be difficult to escape bullying, even when progressing from school to college. This is the same for David, who was repeatedly targeted both at school and at college through both verbal and cyber forms of bullying, highlighting the difficulty of escaping victimisation. However, much depends on what actually happened in terms of the impact that it has on cybervictims. This is why it is important to gather *individual* experiences and perceptions: what some people might see as a joke, others might interpret as cyberbullying, with those viewing an experience as the latter being more negatively affected.

The most common reported effect by cybervictims in terms of their mental health and well-being was 'a little impact' (33.8%), followed by 'moderate impact' (24.8%), and then 'very serious impact' (13.9%). A further 27.5% of cybervictims reported that the cyberbullying experience had 'no impact at all' on their mental health and wellbeing. McLoughlin (2009) found that 90% of cybervictims in their research were adversely affected and 10% felt indifferent to what had happened. This compared to Hinduja and Patchin (2007), who found that 35% of their sample of 468 children were 'not bothered' about being bullied (39.6% felt frustrated, 36% felt angry and 25.2% felt sad. The findings from this study, as well as McLoughlin (2009) and Hinduja and Patchin (2007) show a varying amount of victims reporting feeling no effect / difference on the way they felt. This might be connected with the points considered above made by Sticca and Perren (2013) relating the publicity, medium and anonymity of the bullying/cyberbullying scenario, which could affect the way the victims felt.

The four categories provided for participants in the present study were subjective, and therefore it is difficult to discuss in much detail the overall effect that cyberbullying had on cybervictims in terms of their mental health and wellbeing. However, this was *their* voice, and the cybervictims were in the best position to be able to determine for themselves the extent to which they had been affected by their *individual lived experiences*.

It was clear that around three-quarters of cybervictims felt at least *some* impact on their mental health and wellbeing, which might affect cybervictims in the long term. The findings above show that, generally, it was not the case that experiences of cyberbullying have no impact at all. Whilst some victims of cyberbullying might not be affected by being cyberbullied, others might experience negative feelings that are severe and long-lasting. More research is needed that considers the long-term effects of being cyberbullied on cybervictims, which requires more commitment and resources from scholars and government, but would result in understanding how cyberbullying affects cybervictims both in the short term and in the long term.

The way cybervictims *feel* might lead to certain *acts* or *behaviours,* such as self-harm. Cybervictims in this research were not asked whether they self-harmed, as the *feelings* of cybervictims were part of the research scope, not the physical harm that was caused. However, in future research, both the psychological and physical consequences will be considered, as this will allow more of the *lived experience* of cybervictims to be understood. One quarter of cybervictims in this research reported feeling suicidal, which might have led to some of them self-harming; however, this is not known. Cross *et al* (2009) found that 5% of cybervictims in

their research self-harmed and 3% attempted suicide. The findings were higher in the Ditch the Label (2014) study—30% of victims had suicidal thoughts and 10% attempted suicide. Despite the range of frequencies in these findings, it is clear that victims of bullying and cyberbullying not only feel as though they do not want to be alive anymore, but report actually trying to take their lives. Hinduja and Patchin (2010) found that cybervictims were 1.9 times more likely to attempt suicide than those who had not experienced bullying/cyberbullying. The cases of college-aged teenagers such as Martin Holder, Anthony Stubbs and Daniel Perry (see section 2.8.1)—all of whom committed suicide because of being cyberbullied—show the tragic and devastating consequences that can and do result from being cyberbullied.

A range of emotional and physical impacts were reported by those who were interviewed about their experiences, as well as in Sasha's Story. Lucy reported feeling upset after being cyberbullied and felt suicidal at one point. David reported that his self-confidence and self-image were negatively affected and that he now does not feel able to trust people easily. David also suffered from depression and he self-harmed. Sarah reported that being cyberbullied added to existing problems that she had already had, such as anaemia, and it was something else she had to deal with. The same was true for Laura, who reported self-harming because of everything else that was going on. Angela felt upset and anxious and could not believe that bullying had followed her home. Katie's confidence levels were negatively affected and she lacked concentration in lessons. The consequences of being a victim can also extend to the victim's family and friends: this could be seen clearly in Sasha's Story, in which Sasha verbally and physically abused her

mother. She felt scared of people and situations, and isolated herself, only going out with her family.

Overall, the impact reported by cybervictims was varied, but it was clear that in the majority of cases, being cyberbullied led to negative psychological and emotional consequences, which in some cases led to self-harm. College students who experience cyberbullying, and are affected in the ways discussed, can have a miserable and unhappy experience both inside and outside college that can also affect others around them. It is important that colleges develop robust support structures that work to provide help and guidance to students who have been affected by cyberbullying.

Learning/Academic Performance

A large minority of cybervictims (42.8%) reported that their learning/academic performance was adversely affected by their experiences of being cyberbullied, but it was not clear what cyberbullies used as a measure to determine this. Three in ten cybervictims reported that their attendance to lessons at college was affected and a third of cybervictims reported having difficulty concentrating, both of which could also affect learning at college. However, what was not considered was how often students missed lessons/college; such information would have informed the extent to which being cyberbullied affected students. Cross *et al.* (2009) found that 40% of cybervictims in their research were reluctant to go to school after being cyberbullied. The researchers also calculated that 36% of all truancy from school was because of pupils being bullied/cyberbullied. The truancy rate because of bullying was 20% in the Ditch the Label (2014) study and 44% in Guasp (2012).

Research by the DCSF (2007) and Ditch the Label (2014) found that the exam performance of victims of bullying was worse compared to those who were not bullied. This was seen to have a wider impact, with the DCSF (2007) also reporting that young people who reported being bullied at school were twice as likely not to continue with their education, or not be in employment or training after leaving school. Guasp (2012) reported that 32% of LGB bully victims reported changing their plans for future education and 44% believed their plans for their future career were affected because of being bullied. Together, these findings show the potential for not only learning and academic performance to be affected, but also that victims of bullying/cyberbullying can be affected in the longer term in terms of their future education and career plans.

More research needs to be undertaken to identify and measure the effect of being bullied/cyberbullied on learning/academic performance, since there is a limit to measuring the overall impact while the students are still in college. The measures of the impact of being cyberbullied on learning/academic performance might be seen to be a combination of a cybervictim's performance throughout their course against predicted grades, the grades that the students achieve at the end of their course, and how much these grades differ from what they were hoping or expected to achieve. However, what also needs to be considered is whether the cybervictim *feels* that their learning has been affected, as it is *their* voice that is important.

David reported that his education at college was affected because on one course he should have received a Merit grade but he only achieved a Pass. Not only did the outcome of David's performance suffer, but his educational experience at

college suffered too: he isolated himself and lost trust in people, preferring to work on his own, despite the emphasis on team working on the courses on which he had enrolled. Sasha's systematic experiences of being bullied meant that she was absent from school more than she attended. The severe impact on Sasha's feelings, coupled with her low attendance at school, were contributory factors in achieving lower-than-expected exam results.

Schools and colleges are contexts for learning and a place for students to achieve; being cyberbullied can not only affect the potential of students to learn and achieve, but can also impact on students' positive experiences of attending school and college. Schools and colleges have a duty to students to ensure that they do learn and achieve according to their potential, in a safe and secure learning environment which is free from fear of being discriminated, harassed or (cyber) bullied. However, at school, David, Katie and Sasha did not receive help that protected them from being bullied/cyberbullied further. David was told that because it was cyberbullying, the school could not do anything about it, which ultimately resulted in David having to change schools. Katie was not believed when she reported her experiences to pastoral staff, and Sasha endured bullying throughout the whole of secondary school because teachers missed the warning signs of being upset, withdrawn and unhappy—despite having an anti-bullying certificate displayed in their reception area. Sarah, Katie and Laura all shared the opinion that cyberbullying was less of a problem at college, as people there are more grown up and mature.

Although the prevalence rate for being cyberbullied in this study was less than in most others—perhaps because the context was in colleges with older students—

nonetheless, cyberbullying *does* happen amongst college students, and therefore the government and colleges must be proactive in dealing with cyberbullying. This should be in the form of guidance, resources and a real commitment to tackling the mistreatment of technology and other people. Lucy, David and Laura all reported that they had had a tutorial session on cyberbullying when they first started college, but they could not remember the contents of it. Angela also had a tutorial on cyberbullying but stated that no one was paying attention because her tutor group were encouraged to work in their tutorial period. It appears as though not enough is currently being done in colleges to tackle cyberbullying.

Social Integration

Gangadharbatla (2008) suggested that young people join social networking sites to make friends, keep in touch, and develop an online identity. Wingate *et al.* (2013) and Boyd (2014) suggested that technology facilitates interaction and enables friendships to develop so that people feel a sense of belonging. Given that many of the experiences of being cyberbullied in this research involved friends and friendship groups, this shows how sensitive social relationships are to changing because of cyberbullying.

A large minority of cybervictims (42.5%) reported that their ability to develop relationships offline was affected by being cyberbullied, and a third of cybervictims reported that their ability to develop relationships online had been affected. There might have been a link between not attending college because of being cyberbullied and not being able to develop relationships online and offline because of reduced interaction with peers at college; however, this relationship was not considered in this research.

The majority of cybervictims reported using technology for the same amount of time after being cyberbullied (68.5%), with lower but comparable rates of cybervictims each reporting to use technology more (15%) and less (16.5%) after being cyberbullied. The reasons why cybervictims' use of technology changed (or remained the same) were not investigated in this research. Those who reported using technology for the same amount of time or increased their usage might have been more resilient to being cyberbullied than those who reported using technology less, who might have avoided technology as a way of avoiding being cyberbullied; however, this is speculation.

Those who were interviewed reported changing their behaviour online and offline after being bullied or cyberbullied. Lucy twice closed down her Ask.FM account. Sarah deleted her cyberbullies from MSN. David removed those who were cyberbullying him from Facebook and avoids going to the town centre on his own because he fears that he will see those who bullied him and that they will target him again. Katie deleted her Facebook account and stopped going online. Angela deleted those she did not know from Facebook after being cyberbullied and avoids places like Ask.FM. Ackers (2010) explained that social isolation can occur through avoiding or not using technology, which in turn can lead to a lack of integration with peers and missed learning and social opportunities. However, the actions of the victims mentioned above can be seen as proactive in order to avoid being cyberbullied again, but in the long term could affect their confidence in using technology to socialise, given their negative experiences. As well as affecting social relationships and social integration, avoiding or using technology less can also impact on learning, since technology is increasingly being used to

support or enhance learning. The need to continue to use technology for socialising and learning can affect the positive experience of its use.

Although not all of those who were interviewed were cybervictims at college, their experiences of being bullied or cyberbullied at school were seen to affect them at college. Laura reported not being able to properly communicate with people at college because she does not trust people not to hurt her. Laura also feels out of place in her friendship group at college because one of the girls who cyberbullied her is in the same group. To avoid any confrontation or discomfort, Laura avoids her friendship group, and the places where they go at college, when this girl is around. Ackers (2012) explained that social isolation might occur through victims isolating themselves, or through social rejection by peers, or both. In Laura's experience, she is excluding herself from social situations because she does not want to feel uncomfortable. Similar to Laura, David is less trusting of other people because of his experiences of being bullied and cyberbullied. By isolating himself, David has found his college work to be challenging because of the emphasis on team working. Katie has not used Facebook since starting college; she reports not making friends as easily because she is more judgemental. Angela still feels nervous of becoming a cybervictim again at college, but she has surrounded herself with friends at college who have also been victims of bullying or cyberbullying.

Sarah explained that her experiences of being cyberbullied have made her choose her friends at college more carefully and that she now distances herself from those whom she sees as 'bad energy'. Sarah finds that she thinks more about what she writes online now because she knows from her own experiences that words can be

misinterpreted, but she does not feel that she has to filter face-to-face conversations in this way. Similar to Sarah, Lucy finds that she now thinks more about what she says and writes to people and how she treats people, because she knows how it feels to be mistreated. Sasha has been bullied and cyberbullied over a long period of time. She has isolated herself from people and situations, and has become reclusive. Sasha had to change courses at college because her experiences continued after one of her cyberbullies started on the same course and continued to target her.

Although it is evident from the experiences above that being a cybervictim can affect making friends and developing relationships with people online and offline, more research needs to be undertaken so that this aspect can be considered in more detail. The was a lack of focus on collecting a lot of data on the impact of cyberbullying on social integration, and given that 'friendship groups' featured as one of the most prevalent themes in this research, this adds to the need to understand the impact of cyberbullying on social integration.

5.5.2 Cyberbullies

Feelings

The effect that cyberbullying has on those who cyberbully others has not been well considered in the research literature or, regrettably, in this research—at least in comparison to cybervictims. In this research, cyberbullies were asked whether they felt remorse after cyberbullying someone: a third of cyberbullies reported feeling remorse and two-thirds reported not feeling remorse. One possible explanation surrounding why the majority of cyberbullies reported not feeling remorse could be related to the lack of intention to cause harm, or otherwise a lack

of awareness that their behaviour caused the victim harm because of the impersonal nature of technology. This might be because the anonymity and the lack of physical proximity to other people when using technology makes it difficult to see the reaction of the victim to what is written or posted online. Consequently, cyberbullies might not have empathy, not because they are morally disengaged, but because they do not know the impact their behaviour has had on the victim (Goleman, 2006; Pornari and Wood, 2010). This notion was captured by the quote of one cyberbully who reported not feeling remorseful for his behaviour:

> *To me it's just having a bit of a laugh and I thought they would take it as a laugh, which sometimes they do. But for all I know they could be putting on a face to try and not look bothered* (Boy cyberbully, 18, White British)

An alternative explanation for the majority of cyberbullies reporting that they did not feel remorse—notwithstanding the cyberbully knowing whether or not harm was caused to the victim—was that they were *morally disengaged* (Perren *et al.* 2012). Bandura (1986; 2001) explained that people who are *morally engaged* feel guilt and shame for deviant behaviour, whereas these feelings would not be activated if a person were morally disengaged; instead they might experience feelings of happiness and be proud of their behaviour.

However, cyberbullies might not feel remorse for their behaviour because they might feel that they have not done anything wrong, or that the victim deserved to be cyberbullied, perhaps because they had been cyberbullying someone else. Such can be seen in the description provided by the cyberbully below:

> *All I did was had a go at someone on Facebook because they had a go at someone else I felt I had to stick up fr* (sic) *them cus* (sic) *they were being*

> *nasty for no reason and no one else was defending her so I put her straight on what I thought bout* (sic) *her because she was doing it to someone else so it wasn't fair that's it* (Girl cyberbully, 17, White British)

This cyberbully can be compared to Aftab's (2006) description of a *vengeful angel*, who stands up to people who are cyberbullying others. On the basis of enacting revenge, this girl cyberbully might have seen her behaviour as *justified* because her victim was cyberbullying someone else. The fact that this girl reported not feeling remorse for her behaviour adds weight to this line of reasoning.

It might be argued that some cyberbullies experience some positive feelings as a result of targeting others, such as the 41.7% of cyberbullies who reported cyberbullying others for 'fun'. Cyberbullying others for fun can be seen to relate to the *mean girls* type of cyberbully that Aftab (2006) classified as those who cyberbullied others for their own amusement. This can also be seen from the description provided by the following girl cyberbully:

> *Cus (sic) it was funny* (Girl cyberbully, 18, White British)

Some research has pointed to bullies and cyberbullies being affected in the longer term, for example through being more likely to externalise behaviours such as drug taking and alcohol abuse (Cowie and Colliety, 2010). Cyberbullies were also 1.5 times more likely to attempt suicide compared those who were not engaged in cyberbullying (Hinduja and Patchin, 2010). More research needs to be undertaken that relates to how cyberbullying others can affect cyberbullies, since there is limited research to date that focuses on this area.

Learning/Academic Performance

There was not a direct question that considered the effect of cyberbullies' behaviour on their learning/academic performance. This was an omission in the research design, and resulted in a missed opportunity for data collection. This meant that the voices of cyberbullies were not heard in terms of how their experiences of cyberbullying affected their learning/academic performance. This should be the focus of future research, since the little research that has considered the relationship between bullying/cyberbullying and academic performance has focused only on victims of bullying. Such research is need to be able to understand how being a cyberbully can affect those who cyberbully others in terms of academic performance and would provide cyberbullies with a voice in this regard, as this area has not been considered to date.

Social Integration

There was not a direct question that asked cyberbullies what affect their behaviour had on their ability to make friends, which represents a missed opportunity in data collection. However, the finding that 67% of cyberbullies did not feel remorse can be used as an indicator of social integration in terms of empathy and reading the social cues of others. This can be related to a lack of cognitive empathy in cyberbullies compared to those who have not cyberbullied others. This in turn can affect the development of relationships with others (Ang and Goh, 2010).

Wingate *et al*. (2013) suggested that cyberbullies might be more popular with peers because of an enhanced social status, which can provide them with power. Social acceptance might be achieved from engaging in cyberbullying behaviours, which in turn might create power and status for cyberbullies, meaning that people

might gravitate towards them because of their popularity, for protection, or because they do not want to be cyberbullied themselves. This related to the finding in this research that one-fifth of cyberbullies reported engaging in cyberbullying behaviours for power/status/popularity.

However, later in life, and outside of an educational context, cyberbullies might have fewer friends because of not respecting people's social boundaries or expectations regarding accepted behaviour (Wingate *et al*., 2013). Furthermore, the overall life chances, such as job prospects, of those who engage in bullying behaviours are likely to be reduced, and they are also more likely to be in violent relationships (Pornari and Wood, 2010). College is a place where students can enhance their skills and qualifications, meet new people and develop friendships, and increase their employability. Those who engage in cyberbullying behaviours can therefore compromise their life chances and quality of life.

Upon reflection, the causes and consequences of being a cyberbully were not considered in sufficient depth in this research. It was the intention to consider the consequences for both cyberbullies and cybervictims; however, the vast majority of information provided concerned cybervictims. This was an oversight in the questions that were devised for the questionnaire. This was not helpful in terms of providing a voice to cyberbullies that is already relatively lacking in the literature. More needs to be done in terms of establishing the causes and consequences of cyberbullying others as a result of their behaviour in order to understand cyberbullying from the perspectives of cyberbullies. Furthermore, although data can be collected in the short term, as with cybervictims, longitudinal research is also required in order to appreciate the long-term consequences of being a

cyberbully. This requires investment of time and money, but since overall research on the long-term consequences of being a cyberbully and being a cybervictim is lacking, such a commitment is needed at government level in order that there is more and deeper understanding of how cyberbullying affects people's lives.

6 Conclusions

The conclusions chapter begins with a reminder of the substantive issue and a summary of the answers to the four main research questions. The strengths and limitations of the study are then outlined, followed by recommendations for policy and practice. The thesis ends with advice for future research.

6.1 The Substantive Issue and Research Findings

Cyberbullying is a behavioural phenomenon that has not been afforded adequate attention amongst 16- to 19-year-olds in colleges in the wider research literature. The voices and experiences of students in colleges have not been the focus of academic research or in developing government policy in relation to cyberbullying. With a growing number of teenagers continuing their education in colleges, it is important that there is more research on both bullying and cyberbullying within this context and age group in order to understand the behaviours of students, and in turn, to develop strategies to improve policy and practice in post-16 education in dealing with bullying and cyberbullying. Colleges need to be places where students can build confidence, develop as individuals, learn skills and gain qualifications. They are not places where students should be subjected to bullying or cyberbullying, but nonetheless, this research has shown that students at college engage in cyberbullying others and are cyberbullied. Using a mixed methodology, which resulted in 5,690 online questionnaire responses from 41 colleges, and six students being interviewed about their experiences of being bullied/cyberbullied, it was found that cyberbullying is prevalent in colleges.

There are around 1,367,000 students learning in colleges in England: such a large part of our society cannot remain overlooked. Their voices and experiences need to be heard: this is vital so that the breadth and depth of cyberbullying can be captured, investigated and understood. In this way, awareness can be raised of cyberbullying in post-16 education and more time, effort and resources can be directed to supporting colleges and their students in dealing with the issues of bullying and cyberbullying amongst older teenagers. The use of phenomenology as a guiding framework in this research has enabled the voices of students in colleges to be heard and more research must be done to continue this so that awareness of cyberbullying can be raised.

How prevalent is cyberbullying amongst students in post-16 education?

This research revealed that 7.9% of 16- to 19-year-olds surveyed reported being cybervictims since starting college, which was lower than the prevalence reported in many other studies in the wider research literature, especially amongst younger age groups. Direct comparison with other studies was limited due to methodological and conceptual differences, and also to differences in the age group, context, and the research design. Despite offline bullying not being the focus of this research, it was found that 16.4% of participants reported being victims of such bullying as college students: more than the 7.9% of students who reported being cybervictims at college. More research is needed that places emphasis on both online and offline bullying in this context.

This research also revealed that 2.9% of participants reported being offline bullies since starting college. This might suggest, in the same way as those who were cyberbullied, that offline bullying is more of a problem amongst college students

than cyberbullying. This finding supports the need for more research into both online and offline bullying in order to understand this further. However, weight should be given to the relatively low response rate of this research.

This research has shown that cyberbullying is prevalent amongst 16- to 19-year-old college students. However, just because cyberbullying was found to be less prevalent amongst college students compared to school-age children, this does not mean to suggest that college students' experiences of cyberbullying are any less important or that the consequences of being cyberbullied are any less severe. What has also been shown by the findings is that cyberbullying experiences are varied in terms of what has happened, what it relates to, how many times it happens and how long it lasts. More research needs to be directed to this age group and context in order to improve understanding of both bullying and cyberbullying in this context. It was estimated that 107,993 students nationally aged 16 to 19 years old in colleges might have experienced cyberbullying as cybervictims and around 25,973 have cyberbullied others. This estimate goes some way towards showing the potential scale and problem of cyberbullying in colleges, and thus provides a rationale for more research to be undertaken in this context. However, fewer than five percent of cybervictims reported being targeted *just* at college, which affects how colleges deal with cyberbullying that happens outside of college and is perpetrated by people who do not attend college or who are anonymous.

Participants generally, not just those who were cyberbullied or were cyberbullies, were also provided with a voice in this study. Overall, cyberbullying in their colleges was seen as a problem by a substantial number, albeit a minority, of

students. These findings emphasise the need for more research in this age group and context, and also highlight the importance of collecting data from students generally about bullying/cyberbullying, not just those who have experienced it directly.

Are there particular groups that engage in or experience cyberbullying disproportionately?

The table in section 5.3.14 provides a summary of findings for the different categories of the demographic groups that were disproportionately involved as cybervictims or cyberbullies. In relation to cybervictims, a disproportionate relationship was found with at least one category for each demographic, and apart from 'age' and 'ethnicity', these relationships were statistically significant. With cyberbullies, with the exception of 'physical disability' and 'financial assistance', a disproportionate relationship was found with at least one category for each demographic. Similar to cybervictims, 'age' was not found to be a statistically significant relationship. Despite these relationships, it did not always follow that the reasons for being cyberbullied were related to respondents' demographic characteristics (for example, those who reported having autism/Asperger's syndrome were not always targeted because of their disability). However, this research did not specifically investigate the reasons why each demographic was cyberbullied: this should be the focus of future research. Nonetheless, the findings highlight that certain groups of college students—which might also apply more widely—were more at *risk* of being cyberbullied. However, this needs to be achieved in a way that does not divert attention and resources from students generally, as cybervictims have been found amongst *all* demographic groups.

It was not the intention of this research to construct a profile of a 'typical' cybervictim. Such profiling might be statistically achieved with regression analysis, but such modelling would be too simplistic to take full account of the complexities of cyberbullying, as it is a *behavioural* phenomenon. Furthermore, as people have multiple characteristics—for example, a boy who is gay and Black with learning disabilities—it might be harder to separate the intricacies of what characteristics, if any, are involved in being a cyberbully or cybervictim, and whether specific characteristics combined also make a difference to being a cyberbully or cybervictim, such as whether being a girl *and* being physically disabled *and* receiving financial assistance makes girls a cybervictim, as they were all statistically significant relationships.

The range of demographic characteristics considered in this study exceeded those considered in any one study in the wider research literature. However, these characteristics were predominantly considered at surface level in this research, as the aim was to consider *which* groups were disproportionately involved in cyberbullying, and not *why* the groups were involved. This means that more research is needed to investigate why particular groups are involved as cybervictims or cyberbullies. More research in the same context and age group would triangulate the findings of this research and validate the findings; research in different contexts and amongst different age groups would also serve to triangulate the relationships.

There were both similarities and differences in the findings of the characteristics of cyberbullies and cybervictims who were found to be disproportionately involved in cyberbullying. One example was with gender: girls were found to be

cybervictims more than boys, and conversely boys were found to be cyberbullies more than girls. The findings were similar, for example, with DDLN: those who reported having DDLN were disproportionately engaged in cyberbullying as both cyberbullies and cybervictims. These findings represent the starting point in terms of knowledge, to facilitate further research on the relationships between these different demographic characteristics and how they relate to being cyberbullied and cyberbullying others.

This research also found a statistically significant relationship between being a cyberbully and being a cybervictim. This relationship adds to the complexity of understanding cyberbullying as a phenomenon and the behaviours of those involved. This is because of the *dual* role reported by a disproportionate amount of cyberbullies and cybervictims, rather than being a 'pure cyberbully' or 'pure cybervictim'. This relationship needs to be investigated further in terms of whether being a cybervictim and being a cyberbully are related or sequential, and if so, in what order and why. What was made clear by this finding, in particular, was that being a cyberbully and being a cybervictim should not be seen as dichotomous or mutually exclusive phenomena.

What Reasons do Students in College Give for Cyberbullying Others and for Being Cyberbullied?

The three reasons for being cyberbullied most frequently reported by cybervictims were their physical appearance, friendship groups, and intelligence/ability. The same three reasons were also the most frequently reported by cyberbullies for cyberbullying others. Using attribution theory, from the perspective of the cybervictim, 'physical appearance' and 'intelligence/ability' were identified as

internal attributions, and 'friendship groups' was an external attribution. It was interesting that these three reasons were the most frequently reported in this age group and context: students go to college to learn and yet they report cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied because of their intelligence/ability—something for which they should be praised, rather than targeted. With friendship groups, whilst it is understandable that relationships can develop and break down, a lot of teenagers use technology in order to make friends and socialise, but cited 'friendship groups' as a main reason for cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied. In relation to physical appearance, teenagers in particular can be more insecure about their image in terms of looks and weight, and being targeted about these features can damage their self-confidence.

Knowing that these are the most frequently reported reasons for cyberbullying can help government and colleges to frame guidance and concentrate efforts in raising awareness of cyberbullying, create resources that appeal and relate to the experiences of teenagers studying in colleges, help students and staff to understand the main reasons why people engage in cyberbullying others, and encourage students to be more mindful of what they say and do, which essentially involves treating each other and other people better. This is especially true with those who make comments on photographs of other people, which was seen as a key theme for how the cyberbullying was carried out. However, it is also important not to generalise from the most common reasons provided, as it is important to consider the voices of *all* cybervictims and cyberbullies, whose individual experiences are diverse.

The five most frequently reported reasons that cyberbullies provided for cyberbullying others that were not connected to their victims' demographics were 'anger', 'fun', 'revenge', 'boredom' and 'provocation'. The first four are seen as internal attributions, and provocation is seen as an external attribution, suggesting that cyberbullies were more aware that the cause of their behaviour was themselves. However, cyberbullies tended to choose options that were both internal and external attributions, which shows that there was a mix of reasons for cyberbullying others. These reasons might be connected: for example, with *provocation*, the cyberbully might have been provoked by someone, and then sought to get *revenge* by cyberbullying them.

Overall, the reasons for being cyberbullied and cyberbullying others were varied, with cybervictims and cyberbullies choosing from all the options provided in the questionnaire. Some of the reasons for cyberbullying others were discriminatory in nature, such as targeting victims based on their ethnicity and sexual orientation. A large minority of cyberbullies perceived their behaviour as 'a joke', but cyberbullying behaviours generally were seen to differ in both motive and intention to harm, which creates difficulty in being able to define 'what' cyberbullying is and 'who' is a cyberbully.

The actions and behaviours of cyberbullies were varied, owing to the different and often multiple reasons given by cyberbullies for them. This adds to the complexity of understanding cyberbullying as a phenomenon and those who engage in it as cyberbullies. The research literature has highlighted different types of cyberbullies, with their behaviour differing in their intent to cause harm and their reasons for engaging in cyberbullying (e.g. the vengeful angel, the power-hungry

and the revenge of the nerds). Each of these types of cyberbully has different motivations for their behaviour and different levels of intention to harm another person, which can affect the intention element of the criteria of being a cyberbully. Therefore, it is important to realise that there is not one type of cyberbully; nor is there one type of cyberbullying behaviour. Understanding this means that research can advance with the knowledge that there are different causes and reasons for such cyberbullying behaviour, and that each of these should be considered separately in order to develop appropriate strategies to prevent and respond to each type of behaviour.

What are the consequences of cyberbullying on feelings, learning and social integration for cyberbullies and cybervictims?

The impact of being cyberbullied on cybervictims' feelings, academic performance and social integration were considered in this research. The majority of cybervictims reported experiencing multiple negative feelings, the most prevalent of which were 'anger', 'hurt' and 'sadness'. Being cyberbullied as a college student, whether it happens inside or outside college, can affect the quality of one's experience at college and one's quality of life outside college, both in the short term and the long term. In terms of physical health, being cyberbullied can lead to cybervictims self-harming. However, a quarter of cybervictims reported that their feelings were not affected by being cyberbullied, which shows a contrast in the consequences of cyberbullying on victims. The extent to which victims of cyberbullying are negatively affected by their experiences is dependent on, for example, the intensity, frequency, and nature of the bullying. This is perhaps why some cybervictims reported not being negatively affected at all by their

experiences. Those who reported no negative effects may also have relatively higher resilience levels and better coping strategies. However, this relationship was not considered.

The learning/academic performance of a cybervictim can be compromised, although the extent to which learning/academic performance was affected was not clear in this research, other than cybervictims self-reporting that it had been affected. Although the majority of cyberbullying was reported to occur outside of college, nonetheless colleges have a duty to provide support to cybervictims in terms of advice and guidance. College is a place for learning and achieving, not for being cyberbullied.

In terms of social integration, technology is used by teenagers to a means of developing and maintaining relationships with peers. Technology also represents an opportunity for teenagers to develop an online social identity and to feel part of an online community. Being cyberbullied can affect their ability and willingness to socialise online and can lead to social rejection. It can also result in changes in using technology, such as closing down social networking sites or not using technology as much. Many experiences involved cybervictims being targeted by their friends, which could affect their existing relationships with friends and making new friendships both online and offline.

Providing a specific insight into how older adolescents are affected by cyberbullying can inform prevention and intervention strategies, and can frame how young people can build their resilience. Support services, such as counselling services and pastoral staff, will have a better understanding and empathise more readily with cybervictims seeking help. Moreover, just because somebody says

that they are okay, this does not mean that they are. They should still be offered the support, advice and guidance available.

6.2 Strengths of this Research

There were numerous and varied strengths of this research in terms of the questions asked, the methodology and methods used, the scope of the research design and research questions and the literature review.

This study is valuable to the field of cyberbullying research because it considered an under-researched age group in a largely unconsidered context. A central aim and feature of this research was the importance of collecting the voices of 16- to 19-year-olds in colleges. The age group researched was a substantive part of the original contribution of this research; up until now, the voices of 16- to 19-year-olds in college had been a relatively neglected area in bullying and cyberbullying research.

The sample size and the number of college that participated was another strength of this research. A total of 5,690 questionnaires were completed by students aged 16 to 19 years old from 41 colleges in England participated in this research. This was a relatively large sample compared to many of the other studies considered in this thesis. The sample was shown to be reasonably representative of the population.

The mixed-methods design removed the dichotomy of quantitative and qualitative approaches to research and data collection, and, coupled with a phenomenological approach, went some way to ensure that the voices of young people were heard, whether or not they were involved in cyberbullying as victims or bullies.

Participants were able to use their own experiences and talk freely in their own words, which provided an important perspective in cyberbullying research that should form part of future research so that cyberbullying is understood from the perspective of those that experience it.

The use of the online questionnaire allowed data to be collected from many participants in an efficient way. Results for each college were collated and sent to them so they could use the results to get an overview of the issues in their college and to take appropriate action. All colleges that participated were provided with an anonymised copy of the questionnaire results which related directly to their institution. Colleges were told that this information would be useful in gaining an overview of cyberbullying in their college and to help them improve services in relation to prevention and response. Each college was also provided with a free copy of an anti-cyberbullying DVD, produced by a group of 16–18 year olds who studied at the college where the researcher works.

Furthermore, this thesis engaged with theory to offer a theoretical explanation for cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied, using attribution theory, whereas most of the other literature has not considered a theoretical model at all. This is important, as more research needs to employ theoretical models in bullying and cyberbullying research because relatively little is understood about *why* people cyberbully others. This thesis has advanced discussion on this issue, upon which future research can build.

Very few studies in the literature considered actually provided details of the experiences of the cybervictims they surveyed. Accordingly, research into cyberbullying has not yet adequately shown the range of experiences suffered by

those who have been cyberbullied. In this research, by virtue of the phenomenological framework used, participants were given the opportunity to use their voice and provide details of their experiences. These actual words of participants highlighted the range of different experiences and situations students in colleges have suffered, and, most importantly, what they describe as 'cyberbullying' for themselves.

Participants were asked to consider the time period *since they started college,* as it was the *context* of college that was important to this research. The context that participants are in has rarely featured as a consideration in cyberbullying experiences, but it is important: it is rather meaningless to ask participants if they have been cyberbullied, for example, in the last three months, especially when surveys are carried out at different times of year.

The strengths of this research mean that research into bullying and cyberbullying in colleges amongst this age group, and indeed in other settings and age groups, can advance so that more can be understood about these phenomena. Despite the many strengths of this research, however, it is important to be transparent about the limitations, in order that future research can improve.

6.3 Limitations

There were several limitations in this research in respect of the methodology, depth of study, and theoretical underpinning.

On reflection, there was more focus on cybervictims than cyberbullies in terms of consequences of being involved in cyberbullying. In future research, more focus needs to be put on cyberbullies so that more can be understood about the effects of

being a cyberbully on different aspects of their lives. The questionnaire did not include an item asking participants whether they had been a bully or cyberbully at school, in the same way that it did with victimisation. In the question item that asked participants to select their gender, only 'Boy' and 'Girl' were provided. Given the broad range of classifications of gender, including transgender, at least a further category of 'Other' should have been added. This is in light of twenty-one participants not providing a gender, or otherwise having to select from two dichotomous options. The inclusion of a further option would also have allowed for more analysis to be completed, especially in terms of different groups being involved in cyberbullying. This research should also have included the following questions: "What does the term 'cyberbullying' mean to you?" and "What distinguishes cyberbullying from non-cyberbullying situations?" This is important as it can help to inform, using the voices of this age group, the definition and criteria of cyberbullying. Furthermore, it would have been beneficial to include a question item for cyberbullies to answer regarding their intent: for example, a question such as "Did you intend to cause your victim harm/distress?" This would have provided data to enhance discussion in this area. The question items about whether participants had a physical disability should have gone further by subsequently providing those who indicated 'Yes' with further options for the type of physical disability they had. Information on the specific type of physical disability would have been able to inform the analysis better.

The intention in this research was that by using attribution theory as an explanatory framework, the reasons why students were cyberbullied and why they cyberbullied others would become clearer. To this end, the model was useful, insofar as categorising the reasons into internal and external attributions.

However, this represents only the starting point in the process of being able to understand and explain why students are cyberbullied and why they are cyberbullying others, which should extend beyond mere categorisation into more explanatory frameworks. Although attribution theory was adopted as a model to explain the reasons why people are cyberbullies and cybervictims, instead the model was primarily used to help *categorise* these reasons. Further research, however, can build on its application in this study.

To some extent, there was a gap between the methodological ambition of using phenomenology to gather the lived experiences of cyberbullies and cybervictims and what was actually achieved in this research. Although phenomenology was the most appropriate framework for this research, there were a number of reasons that meant that its application was somewhat limited. Firstly, only six students that came forward to be interviewed, none of whom were engaged in cyberbullying others, which meant that there was an imbalance of participants. A case study was also obtained so as to provide more details of teenagers' lived experience of being bullied/cyberbullied, which did add value to the research. Secondly, the level of questioning in the interviews was limited: the interviews could have lasted longer if further details about participants' *life* experiences had been gathered, rather than just concentrating on their time at school and college. Thirdly, the depth of description allowed by the limits to the other three points was limited in terms of providing the full context in explaining participants' experiences of being victimised. Fourthly, this was my first attempt at developing a phenomenological framework for research, meaning that I had a lack of previous understanding of phenomenology: now that I have developed a framework and recognised its relative strengths and how it can be improved, I can build on this

for future research. Overall, my ambition of uncovering the lived experiences of being a cybervictim and a cyberbully in college was somewhat constrained by external factors and my own experience of designing research methodology. In future research, I would identify both cyberbullies and cybervictims to be interviewed over the period of the research, rather than just in a confined window of participation that could have prevented some people from coming forward. I would also revise the interview schedule to include more questions about their *life story*.

The question items that considered the reasons why victims were cyberbullied did not include an 'Other' response option for participants to provide their own reasons in addition to those already prescribed in the response options. This could have restricted participants' voice in this question, which was not in the spirit of the phenomenological design of this research.

The sampling frame consisted of sixth form colleges and general further education colleges. Those aged 16 to 19 years old who attended post-16 education at their secondary school were not part of this research. However, future research should consider more types of institution that provide provision for 16- to 19-year-olds. The convenience sample could have affected those who participated in the research: for example, those who were cybervictims or cyberbullies. Furthermore, I did not have control over how the online questionnaire was administered once the email was sent out to colleges. However, I did provide colleges with the email content to forward to students.

There were not enough questions asked about the consequences of being a cyberbully. The intention was to consider the consequences for both cyberbullies

and cybervictims, but the majority of data concerned cybervictims. This was an oversight in the questions included in the questionnaire. Ideally I would have liked more participants to come forward for interview, and to access more of the voices of cyberbullies, but who came forward was outside my direct control.

Only students in college who were 16 to 19 years old were considered in this research. However, colleges are centres of learning where a wider age range of people can and do attend. Future research should be designed to include students of all ages who participate in the context being studied so that the voices and experiences of all students in colleges can be considered.

By focusing on *cyberbullying in colleges*, rather than both online and offline in schools *and* colleges, this research missed out on opportunities to collect information that could have led to a better understanding of students' behaviour. However, the length of the questionnaire and the scope of the research had to be limited so that the research was manageable given the constraints in terms of time and word limit.

Despite the relatively large sample size of this study, the response rate was only 6.9%. This was in part due to participants self-selecting to participate and colleges being in charge of sending the questionnaire links to their students.

6.4 Recommendations

The research process and outcomes of this thesis have led to a number of recommendations that can be made in respect to policy and practice and future research.

6.4.1 Policy and Practice

There are a number of points deriving from this research that should be considered by government and colleges in order to improve the guidance and provision of support and understanding cyberbullying amongst 16- to 19-year-olds.

This study has provided a basis for research in post-16 education and highlighted the need for research to continue in this context. Government should commission research and provide funding into bullying and cyberbullying in post-16 education so that more can be understood about these phenomena in this context. Further, government should report how much money is provided to research, resources and tackling bullying/cyberbullying in post-16 education, as presently the funding amounts are only reported according to the organisations that have secured funding, but not where the money is being spent. Colleges should create opportunities for their students to engage in anti-bullying activities, such as making their own DVD or joining an enrichment group so that activities can take place that are specific to the needs and priorities of their own college. Being directly involved in the process of raising awareness in these ways may have more impact. Another benefit of this is that student voice is encouraged and is part of the process.

Young people need to be encouraged to be good citizens, both digitally and offline. Empowering young people to use technology responsibly and to treat people well, online as well as offline, is the key to preventing behaviour that can lead to others being harmed. This advice and support should come in two forms: one is the pastoral side, which includes counselling and teaching students to understand and recognise behaviour that is bullying and cyberbullying, and the

other is the technical side, which includes how to use and how not to use technology. If students do not recognise behaviour as cyberbullying, either as a victim or as a perpetrator, then they are not going to consider it as such and may not report it or stop it.

It would be useful if more demographic data were available, apart from age and gender, for those studying in post-16 education: for example, ethnicity, sexual orientation and SEND. This would make it easier to establish whether the samples used for research in this context are representative of the population. Therefore, government should collect this data and make it accessible for researchers to use.

Government, local authorities and colleges should consider how to take an active involvement in raising awareness and in preventing and responding to bullying and cyberbullying, not least because they have a legal duty to do so. The guidance and resources of these bodies should be age appropriate and age relevant, so that the rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of this age group are considered. It is about time for more up-to-date guidance that focuses specifically on 16- to 19-year-olds. The ethos in colleges should be one in which bullying in any form is not tolerated or allowed to go unchallenged. Colleges can and should provide an ideal setting to change behaviour and attitudes towards bullying and cyberbullying. Colleges should ensure that their anti-bullying policies and behaviour policies are effective in helping to protect students from being victims and deal appropriately with those who behave in ways that are unacceptable. These policies should be communicated to parents, teachers and students. Colleges should promote amongst teachers and staff a culture of mutual respect that includes treating each other properly. Government should consider advising

colleges about the importance of including and developing curriculum and tutorial resources that focus on raising awareness and tackling bullying and cyberbullying in colleges.

Colleges should engage in activities to raise awareness of bullying and cyberbullying as part of their pastoral provision. Preventing cyberbullying from occurring reduces prevalence rates and limits the consequences associated with being a cyberbully and being cyberbullied. Colleges should raise awareness through training staff and distributing information to students and parents, and should dedicate time in college so that students learn about how to behave and treat others with respect, both online and offline. Colleges should also recognise that the nature of cyberbullying means that many incidents may occur offsite and outside hours of normal operation, and therefore the advice offered should cover this also, including contact details for external organisations to which students can be signposted for help. I want it to be that students know that they can seek help from a member of staff at college, and I want all staff to know what to do when a student approaches them for help (preface: 'What do you do?).

6.4.2 Future Research

Future studies should strongly consider collecting data from different age groups, including in particular 16- to 19-year-olds. This age group should not be missed from future research any longer. The voices of students in colleges need to be heard still in order to develop broader and deeper understanding of cyberbullying in this age group and context. Therefore, phenomenology should be used and developed as a theoretical and methodological framework that guides the research, given the emphasis that it places on participants' voices.

Given that 10.5% of participants thought cyberbullying was a problem at their college and 13.9% thought physical and verbal bullying was a problem at their college, it is important that both forms of bullying are considered in research, rather than seeing offline and online bullying as dichotomous phenomena. This encourages a more joined-up approach, allowing for any interconnectedness between these phenomena and understanding the nuances of people's experiences can lead to a greater understanding of bullying/cyberbullying.

Future studies that consider more than one institution should consider the possibility of conducting institutional-level analysis to uncover why there might be differences in prevalence rates in different colleges. Such comparative studies can inform how best to deal with bullying and cyberbullying. Furthermore, future research would benefit from a longitudinal study that considers both bullying and cyberbullying in both schools and colleges. This is important, since research into the long-term consequences of being a bully or a victim is relatively unknown.

An innovative way forward would be to include an item in the questionnaire or interview that questions participants on how *they define* bullying and cyberbullying. This would allow researchers to gather rich and in-depth information from participants, and would be consistent with a phenomenological research design. This is an important recommendation, since there are issues with the current construct of bullying and cyberbullying definitions and criteria; gathering the perceptions of young people in the process of defining and understanding cyberbullying using the *voice* and *perspective* of those who experience cyberbullying as a victim or bully, and also from students generally, so that the opinions and perspectives can be gathered as a whole. Although

cyberbullying research would benefit from a common and agreed definition and understanding of what is meant by 'cyberbullying', it is also important for definitions to evolve according to changes and developments in people's understanding of their own behaviours and the behaviours of others.

Researchers need to be transparent, clear and explicit in their methodology. This is not only important for reporting credible prevalence rates, but also in making comparisons more meaningful, and for enabling differences to be identified and explained more easily. Additionally, future studies can be better informed, and theoretical and conceptual frameworks can be developed more quickly in order to conduct rigorous research into this fast-developing phenomenon.

More research must go deeper to investigate the reasons why people are victimised and why people behave in such a way that causes harm to others. As a behavioural phenomenon, bullying and cyberbullying needs to be understood in more depth, not just measured in terms of prevalence levels. In this way, relevant explanatory models, such as attribution theory, should be used to help with this understanding. Such research can help to understand the behaviour of others and can also be useful in determining risk and protective factors for both perpetration and victimisation. Attribution theory is an appropriate framework to use, but this should not be exclusive to cyberbullying research: other theories and approaches should be included too, from different disciplines, such as technology, education and psychology. This will allow a richer and more inclusive understanding of the causes of cyberbullying.

The use of focus groups would be interesting and useful to trial as a research method in cyberbullying research, as this would provide the opportunity for

participants to discuss aspects of cyberbullying, such as the definition and criteria, which might not otherwise be explicated in a questionnaire or interview. The focus group could involve those who have been victims and perpetrators of bullying or cyberbullying, and those who have not been involved as either.

More research into cyberbullying should use a phenomenological research design, so that the voices of participants can be collected in a way that will enrich any quantitative data collected and that the phenomenon can be understood *through the participants' lived experiences*. This is particularly important because of the lack of qualitative studies relating to cyberbullying. Most ideally, a mixed methods research design, inspired by both quantitative and qualitative approaches, should be utilised so that higher quality research can be conducted in this area. Interviewing cybervictims in the present study was useful in collecting their lived experiences, which could not have been collected in the same way through the questionnaire. Future research should contain interviews with those who have experienced or engaged in bullying or cyberbullying to provide depth and insight into their lived experiences. Such an approach to collecting data will add value to a research project in terms of enriching the understanding of bullying and cyberbullying as a phenomenon through the voices and experiences of participants.

Researchers should generally be more transparent in their methodology and be clear on the research design and methods they have used. This will help in comparing studies and developing the methodologies that are used in cyberbullying research. For example, researchers should consider categorising frequencies of incidents, such as 'once', 'twice', etc. so that discrepancies in

definitions and criteria can be taken account of in the discussion. The measurement of cyberbullying is problematic and misleading because even if repetition is needed, which is still inconclusive, then discounting participants who selected '1-2 times' means that those who were targeted '2 times' could have their voices and experiences lost because of the measurement preferences of a researcher. This is not good enough and researchers need to have more transparent reasons for making their decisions as to what to include / exclude and, in any case, to present all their findings in their included / excluded categories so that they can still be critiqued by others.

Students should think about what they do online and use technology responsibly. They should understand that actions online have consequences and that cyberbullying *is* real and has real consequences for cyberbullies and cybervictims. They should treat each other properly and realise that by using technology, their intentions and other people's perceptions of their behaviour and actions may be perceived differently by other people. There are lots of reasons and motives for behaving in a certain way: even if you do not think you are a cyberbully and do not intend to harm anyone, you might well do so. There are always two sides to every story: the perspectives of both the cyberbully and the cybervictim matter. The voice and perception of students is important to consider: where one student feel that he or she has been cyberbullied and the cyberbully feels that it is a joke or was meant to be banter, this can make it harder to know what the reality is. But it should be that if a student *feels* that he or she has been cyberbullied, then it is *their* voice that matters.

Cyberbullying is a behavioural phenomenon that needs to be understood more from the perspectives of the lived experiences and voices of those who cyberbully others and those who have been cyberbullied. Perspectives and perceptions of other people's behaviours are varied, and there are issues concerning repetition and intent to harm that need further investigation, as well as educating and raising awareness amongst students that what might be intended or perceived as a joke can be harmful, and that cyberbullying is real and has real consequences.

Bibliography

Achievement for All (2015). 'Successfully improving outcomes in reading, writing and maths for the country's most vulnerable and disadvantaged children' [Online]. Available from http://www.afa3as.org.uk/achievement-for-all2 [Accessed 6 June 2015].

Ackers, M. (2012). 'Cyberbullying: through the eyes of children and young people', *Educational Psychology in Practice,* 28(2), pp.141-157.

Aftab, P. (2006). 'Wired Safety: A Parent's Guide to Cyberbullying' [Online]. Available from https://www.wiredsafety.org/toolkitmedia/files/file/Parent_s_Articles/A_Parent_s_Guide_to_Cyberbullying_-_Extended.pdf [accessed 12 Oct 3013].

Agatston, P., Kowalski, R. and Limber, S. (2007). Brief report Students' Perspectives on Cyber Bullying, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 41, S59–S60.

Andretta, S. (2007). 'Phenomenography: a conceptual framework for information literacy education', *New Information Perspectives*, 59(2), pp.152-168.

Ang, R. and Goh, D. (2010). 'Cyberbullying Among Adolescents: The Role of Affective and Cognitive Empathy, and Gender', Child Psychiatry and Human Development, 41(4), pp.387-397.

Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) (2011). Bulling of children with disabilities and Special Educational Needs in schools: briefing paper for parents on the views and experiences of other parents, carers and families [Online]. Available at http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/media/2254/SEND_bullying_briefing_Contact-a-Family-and-ABA_parents.pdf [Accessed 13 Nov 2013].

Archer, J. (2004). Sex Differences in Aggression in Real-World Settings: A Meta-Analytic Review, *Review of General Psychology,* 8(4), pp. 291-322.

Aricak, O. (2009). 'Psychiatric Symptomatology as a Predictor of Cyberbullying

among University Students', *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 34(1), pp.167–184.

Aspers, P. (2004). 'Empirical Phenomenology: An Approach for Qualitative Research', *Papers in Social Research Methods*, 9, pp.1-15.

Atkinson, R. (2008). 'Societal effects of cyberbullying: The dark side of building bridges with technology', *South Atlantic Philosophy of Education Society Yearbook* pp.32-41.

Balls, P (2009). 'Phenomenology in nursing research: methodology, interviewing and transcribing', *Nursing Times*, 105(31), pp.32-33.

Bandura, A. (1986). 'Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory'. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (2002). 'Selective Moral Disengagement in the Exercise of Moral Agency', *Journal of Moral Education*, 31(2), pp.102-119).

Bauman, S. (2007). 'Cyberbullying: A Virtual Menace.' National Coalition Against Bullying National Conference, Australia November 2 – 4 [Online]. Available from http://www.ncab.org.au/Assets/Files/Bauman,%20S.%20Cyberbullying.pdf [accessed 13 Oct 2013].

Bauman, S. (2010). 'Cyberbullying in a Rural Intermediate School: An Exploratory Study', *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 30(6), pp803–833.

Bauman, S., Cross, D., and Walker, J. (Eds.) (2013). 'Principles of Cyberbullying Research: Definitions, Measures, and Methodology'. London: Routledge.

Bauman, S. and Pero, H. (2010). 'Bullying and Cyberbullying Among Deaf Students and Their Hearing Peers: An Exploratory Study', '*Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*', 16(2), pp.236–253.

BBC (2012). 'Tom Daley Twitter abuse: Boy arrested in Weymouth' [Online]. Available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-19059127 [accessed 16th May 2013].

BBC (2013). 'Cyber-bullying: Horror in the home' [Online]. Available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-23727673 [Accessed 19 August 2013].

Beale, A. and Hall, K. (2007). 'Cyberbullying: What school administrators (and parents) can do', *The Clearing House*, 81(1), pp.8-12.

Bechtoldt, M. and Schmitt, K. (2010). 'It's not my fault, it's theirs': Explanatory style of bullying targets with unipolar depression and its susceptibility to short-term therapeutic modification', *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 83, pp.395-417.

Beckman, L. Hagquist, C. and Hellström, L. (2013). 'Discrepant gender patterns for cyberbullying and traditional bullying – An analysis of Swedish adolescent data', Computers in Human Behaviour, 29(5), pp.1896–1903.

Bell, J. (2010). 'Doing your research project: a guide for first time researchers in education, health and social science'. Fifth Edition. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Beran, T. and Li, Q. (2007). 'The relationship between cyber bullying and school bullying.' *Journal of Student Wellbeing*, 1(2), pp.15-33.

Berlan, E., Corliss, H., Field. A., Goodman., and Austin, S. (2010). 'Sexual Orientation and Bullying Among Adolescents in the Growing Up Today Study', *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 46(4), pp.366-371.

Blandford, S. (2015a). *Take the lead.* Suffolk: John Catt.

Blandford, S. (2015b). *Love to teach.* Suffolk: John Catt.

Blandford, S. (2015c). *Make school better.* Suffolk: John Catt.

Blandford, S. (2015d). *Don't Like Mondays?* Suffolk: John Catt.

Blumenfeld, W. and Cooper, R. (2010). 'LGBT and Allied Youth Responses to Cyberbullying: Policy Implications', *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3(1), pp114–133.

Bogdan, R. and Bilken, S. (2007). 'Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theories and Methods' Fifth Edition. London: Pearson Education.

Boon, S. and Sinclair, C. (2009). 'A world I don't inhabit: disquiet and identity in Second Life and Facebook', *Educational Media International*, 46(2), pp99-110.

Bowles, C. and Lesperance, L. (2004). 'Being Bullied in Adolescence: A Phenomenological Study', *Guidance and Counseling*, 19(3), pp.94-102.

Boyd, D. (2014). 'It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens'. London: Yale University Press.

Boyd, D. Marwick, A., Aftab, P. and Koeltl, M. (2009). 'The Conundrum of Visibility', *Journal of Children and Media*, 3(4), pp.410-419.

Boyd, M. (2012). 'A phenomenological investigation of the origination and manifestation of the cyberbully / cyberbullying victim relationship from the perspective of cyberbullying victims' [Online]. Available from http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1614&context=doctoral [accessed 12th March 2013].

British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2011). 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research'. London: BERA.

Brotheridge, C. (2013). 'Explaining bullying: using theory to answer practical questions', *Team Performance Management*, 19(4), pp.185-200.

Brown, L. (2011). 'Empirical Paper – They're All Gonna Laugh At You! Attribution Theory, Bullying Victimisation, and Communication Apprehension When Students Transition Into Middle or High School' [Online]. Available from http://lrbrown77.wordpress.com/2011/12/15/empirical-paper-theyre-all-gonna-laugh-at-you-attribution-theory-bullying-victimization-and-communication-apprehension-when-students-transition-into-middle-or-high-school/ [accessed 3rd March 2013].

Brown, V., Clery, E. and Ferguson, C. (2011). 'Estimating the prevalence of young people absent from school due to bullying.' [Online]. Available from

http://www.natcen.ac.uk/our-research/research/estimating-the-prevalence-of-young-people-absent-from-school-due-to-bullying/ [accessed 3rd March 2013].

Bryman, A. (2008). 'Social Research Methods'. Third Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Butler, D., Kift, S., and Campbell, M. (2010). 'Cyberbullying in schools and the law: is there an effective means of addressing the power imbalance?' *eLaw Journal*, 16(1), pp.84-114.

Byrne, P (2012). 'Come home daddy, Lily misses you': Girlfriend of missing teenage dad Anthony Stubbs in emotional appeal for his return' [Online]. Available at http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/anthony-stubbs-girlfriend-of-missing-teenage-1512474 [accessed 16th May 2013].

Byron, T (2008). 'The Byron Review: Action Plan. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Byron, T. (2010). 'Do we have safer children in a digital world? A review of progress since the 2008 Byron Review' [Online]. Available from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-00290-2010.pdf [accessed 28th June 2012].

Callaghan, N. and Bower, M. (2012). 'Learning through social networking sites – the critical role of the teacher', *Educational Media International*, 49(1), pp.1-17.

Campbell, M. (2005). 'Cyber bullying: An old problem in a new guise?' *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 15(1), pp.68-76.

Campbell, M. (2007). 'Cyber bullying and young people: Treatment principles not simplistic advice' [Online]. Available from http://eprints.qut.edu.au/14903/1/14903.pdf [accessed 13th April 2012].

Campbell, M., Butler, D., and Kift, S. (2008). A school's duty to provide a safe learning environment: Does this include cyberbullying? *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Law and Education*, 13(2), pp21-32.

Carr, W. and Kemmis, S (1986). 'Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research'. Lewes: Falmer Press.

Carrington, V. (2008). 'I'm Dylan and I'm not going to say my last name': some thoughts on childhood, text and new technologies', *British Educational Research Journal*, 34(2), pp.151-166.

Chamberlain, T., George, N. Golden, S., Walker, F. and Benton, T. (2010). 'Tellus4 National Report'. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

Chan, Z., Fung, Y., and Chien, W. (2013). 'Bracketing in Phenomenology: Only Undertaken in the Data Collection and Analysis Process?', *The Qualitative Report*, 18(1), pp.1 – 9.

ChildLine (2006). 'Children talking to ChildLine about bullying' [Online]. Available from http://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/childline-casenotes/childline-casenotes-children-talk-about-bullying.pdf [accessed 14th March 2014].

ChildLine (2008). 'Casenotes: A series of reports on issues facing children today' [Online]. Available from http://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/childline-casenotes/childline-casenotes-children-family-relationship-problems.pdf [accessed 9th March 2014].

ChildLine (2013). '"Can I tell you something?" What's affecting children in 2013' [Online]. Available from http://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/childline-review-2012-2013.pdf [accessed 9th June 2014].

Childnet (2007). 'Cyberbullying: a whole-school community issue' [Online]. Available from http://www.childnet.com/ufiles/cyberbullyingOverview.pdf [accessed 10th October 2011].

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2011). 'Research Methods in Education'. Seventh Edition. London: Routledge.

Cole, M. (2010). 'Hermeneutic Phenomenological Approaches in Environmental Education Research with Children', *Contemporary Approaches to Research in Mathematics, Science, Health and Environmental Education*, ?(?), pp1-5.

Copeland, W., Wolke, D., Angold, A., & Costello, E. (2013). 'Adult psychiatric outcomes of bullying and being bullied by peers in childhood and adolescence.' *JAMA Psychiatry, 70*(4), 419-426.

Corcoran, L., Connolly, I. and O'Moore. M. (2012). 'Cyberbullying in Irish schools: an investigation of personality and self-concept', *The Irish Journal of Psychology*, 33(4), pp.153-165.

Corney, B. (2008). 'Aggression in the workplace: A study of horizontal violence utilising Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology', *Journal of Health Organisation and Management*, 22(2), pp.164-177.

Cowie, H. and Colliety, P. (2010). 'Cyberbullying: sanctions or sensitivity?', *Pastoral Care in Education,* 28(4), pp.261-268.

Creswell, J. (2009). 'Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches'. Third Edition. London: Sage Publications.

Cronin, P., Ryan, F. and Coughlan, M. (2008). 'Undertaking a literature review: a step-by-step approach', *British Journal of Nursing,* 17(1), pp.38-43.

Cross, D., Epstein, M., Clark, S. and Lester, L. (2008). 'Cyber bullying in Australia: Trends and recommended responses'. Presentation at the biennial conference of the International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development, Würzburg, Germany.

Cross, E., Piggen, R., Douglas, T. and Vonkaenel-Flatt, J. (2009). 'Virtual Violence: Protecting Children from Cyberbullying'. London: Beatbullying. Available from http://www.beatbullying.org/pdfs/Virtual-Violence-I.pdf [Archived]

Cross, E., Piggen, R., Douglas, T. and Vonkaenel-Flatt, J. (2012). 'Virtual Violence II: Progress and Challenges in the Fight Against Cyberbullying'.

London: Beatbullying. Available from http://www.beatbullying.org/pdfs/Virtual-Violence-II.pdf [Archived].

Curtis, B. and Mays, W. (1978). 'Phenomenology and Education; Self-consciousness and its development'. London: Methuen.

Davies, M. (2007). 'Doing a successful research project: using qualitative or quantitative methods'. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Davis, K. and James, C. (2012). 'Tweens' conceptions of privacy online: implications for educators', *Learning, Media and Technology*, 38(1), pp.4-25.

Dawson, C. (2009). 'Introduction to research methods: a practical guide for anyone undertaking a research project'. Fourth Edition. Oxford: How To Books.

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2007a). 'Safe to learn: embedding anti-bullying work in schools' [Online]. Available at http://endbullying.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/safetolearn_overview.pdf [accessed 4th March 2013].

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2007b). 'Youth Cohort Study and Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: The Activities and Experiences of 16 Year Olds: England 2007' [Online]. Available from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110206154043/http:/education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000795/index.shtml [accessed 3rd February 2013].

Department for Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2007c). 'Cyberbullying' [Online]. Available from www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications [accessed February 2013 - now archived ref. DCSF-00658-2007].

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2009). 'Safe from bullying in further education colleges' [Online]. Available from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110202093118/publications.education.gov.uk/default.aspx?pagefunction=productdetails&pagemode=publications&productid=dcsf-00445-2009 [accessed 8th November 2013].

Department for Education (DfE) (2012). 'Behaviour and Discipline in Schools: a

guide for head teachers and school staff' [Online]. Available from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/353921/Behaviour_and_Discipline_in_Schools_-_A_guide_for_headteachers_and_school_staff.pdf [accessed 4th April 2013].

Department for Education (DfE) (2013). 'Statistical First Release' [Online]. Available from https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/series/statistics-school-and-pupil-numbers [accessed 6th May 2014].

Department for Education (DfE) (2014a). 'Preventing and tackling bullying: advice for head teachers, staff and governing bodies' [Online]. Available from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/368340/preventing_and_tackling_bullying_october14.pdf (accessed 5th November 2014).

Department for Education (DfE) (2014b). 'Statistical First Release' [Online]. Available from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/322575/Participation_SFR-Final.pdf [accessed 29th December 2014].

Department for Education (DfE) (2014c). Freedom of Information Request. Reference 2014/0075275.

Devine, P. and Lloyd, K. (2012). 'Internet Use and Psychological Well-being among 10-year-old and 11-year-old Children', *Child Care in Practice*, 18(1), pp.5-22.

De Wet, N. (2011) 'Educator-on-educator workplace bullying: A phenomenological study', *Africa Education Review*, 8(3), pp.450-466.

Dillman, D. (1999). 'Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method'. Second Edition. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Ditch the Label (2014). 'Annual Bullying Survey' [Online]. Available from http://www.ukyouth.org/resources/youth-statistics/item/818-bullying#.VNJt81onqRJ (accessed 31st March 2015).

Dooley, J., Pyżalski, J. and Cross, D. (2009). 'Cyberbullying versus face-to-face bullying: a theoretical and conceptual review' *Journal of Psychology*, 217(4), pp.182 – 18.

Douglas, S. and Martinko, M. (2001), 'Exploring the role of individual differences in the prediction of workplace aggression', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86, pp.547-559.

Drennan, J., Brown, M. and Mort, G. (2011). 'Phone bullying: impact on self-esteem and well-being' *Young Consumers*, 12(4), pp.295-309.

Englander, E. (2012). 'Spinning our Wheels: Improving our Ability to Respond to Bullying and Cyberbullying' [Online]. Available from http://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=marc_pubs [accessed 13th March 2013].

Englander, E., Mills, E., and McCoy, M. (2009). 'Cyberbullying and Information Exposure: User-Generated Content in Post-Secondary Education', *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology: Special Edition: Violence and Society in the Twenty-First Century*, 46(2), pp.1-19.

Epstein, A. and Kazmierczak, J. (2007). 'Cyber Bullying: What Teachers, Social Workers, and Administrators Should Know', Illinois Child Welfare, 3(2), pp.41-51.

Farber, A. (2012). 'Hollyoaks tackles cyber bullying' [Online]. Available from http://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/news/broadcasters/hollyoaks-tackles-cyber-bullying/5048114.article [accessed 16th April, 2014].

Farrington, D.P., Losel, F, Ttofi, M.M. and Theodorakis, N. (2012). *School Bullying, depression and offending behaviour in later life: An updated systematic review of longitudinal studies* [Online]. Available at http://www.crim.cam.ac.uk/people/academic_research/maria_ttofi/pub16.pdf (accessed 30 Dec 2015).

Farrow, C. and Fox, C. (2011). 'Gender differences in the relationships between bullying at school and unhealthy eating and shape-related attitudes and

behaviours', British Journal of Educational Psychology, 81(3), pp.409–420.

Feinberg, T. and Robey, N. (2009). 'Cyberbullying: Intervention and Prevention Strategies', 38(4).

Finlay, L. (2009). 'Debating Phenomenological Research Methods', *Phenomenology and Practice*, 3(1), pp.6-25.

Fiske, S. and Taylor, S. (2008). *Social Cognition: From Brains to Culture*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Fried, S. and Sosland, B. (2011). 'Banishing Bullying Behaviour: Transforming the Culture of Peer Abuse'. Second Edition. Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield Education.

Friesen, P (2012). 'Does cultural epistemology impact social issues?' [Online] Available at http://www.pfriesen.com/2012/06/does-cultural-epistemology-impact.html [accessed 12th January 2013].

Gangadharbatla, H. (2008). 'Facebook me: Collective self-esteem, need to belong, and internet self-efficacy as predictors of the i-generation's attitudes towards social networking sites', *Interactive Advertising*, 8(2), pp.5-15.

Gorzig, A. and Frumkin, L. (2013). 'Cyberbullying experiences on the go: when social media can become distressing', *Journal of Psychological Research on Cyberspace*, 7(1).

Gradinger, P., Strohmeier, D. and Zeitschrift, C. 'Traditional Bullying and Cyberbullying Identification of Risk Groups for Adjustment Problems', *Journal of Psychology*, 217(4), pp205–213.

Griffith, S. and Liyanage, L. (2008). 'An introduction to the potential of social networking sites in education'. In Olney, I., Lefoe, G. Mantei, J. and Herrington, J. (Eds.). Proceedings of the Second Emerging Technologies Conference 2008 (pp.76-81).

Groenewald, T. (2004). 'A phenomenological research design illustrated',

International *Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(1), pp.1-26.

Guerra, N., Williams, K. and Sadek, S. (2011). 'Understanding Bullying and Victimisation During Childhood and Adolescence: A Mixed Methods Study', *Child Development*, 82(1), pp.295-310.

Guasp, A. (2012). 'The School Report; The experiences of gay young people in Britain's schools in 2012 [Online]. Available at http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/school_report_2012(2).pdf [accessed 13th March 2013].

Hart, C. (1998). 'Doing a literature review: realising the social science research imagination' London: Sage Publications.

Heider, F. (1958). 'The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations'. New York: Wiley.

Heirman, W. and Walrave, M. (2008). 'Assessing Concerns and Issues about the Mediation of Technology in Cyberbullying'. *Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace,* 2(2).

Hewstone, M. (1990). The 'ultimate attribution error'? A review of the literature on intergroup casual attribution, *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 20(1), pp.311-335.

Hewstone, M., Stroebe, W. and Jonas, K. (2008). *Introduction to Social Psychology: A European Perspective.* 4th Edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Hinduja, S and Patchin, J.W. (2007). Offline consequences of online victimisation: School violence and delinquency, *Journal of School Violence*, 6(3), pp. 89-112.

Hinduja, S. and Patchin, J.W. (2008). 'Cyberbullying: An Exploratory Analysis of Factors Related to Offending and Victimization', *Deviant Behaviour*, 29(2), pp.129-156.

Hinduja, S. and Patchin, J.W. (2010). 'Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Suicide', *Archives of Suicide Research,* 14(3), pp.206-221.

Hinduja, S. and Patchin, J. (2012): 'Cyberbullying: Neither an epidemic nor a rarity', *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 9(5), pp.539-543.

Hoff, D. and Mitchell, S. (2009). 'Cyberbullying: causes, effects and remedies', *Journal of Educational Administration,* 47(5), pp652-665.

Hogg, M and Vaughan, G. (2011). *Social Psychology*. 6th Edition. London: Pearson Education Limited

House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (HCESC) (2007). 'Bullying: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2006-07'. London: The Stationary Office Limited.

IMDb (2011). 'Cyberbully [Online]. Available from http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1930315/fullcredits/ [accessed 27 April 2013]

IMDb (2012a). 'Synopsis for Odd Girl Out' [Online]. Available from http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0433422/synopsis?ref_=ttpl_pl_syn [accessed 27 April 2013].

Jones, E. and Harris, V. (1967). The attribution of attitudes. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 3(1), pp.1-24.

Jones, E., Kanouse, D., Kelley, H., Nisbett, R., Valins, S., and Weiner, B. (1972). 'Attribution: Perceiving the causes of behaviour'. New Jersey: General Learning Press.

Juvonen, J. and Graham, S. (Eds.) (2001). *Peer Harassment in School: The Plight of the Vulnerable and Victimised*. London: The Guildford Press.

Kilkelly, D. (2013). 'Coronation Street's Faye Windass faces police questioning' [Online]. Available from http://www.digitalspy.co.uk/soaps/s3/coronation-street/news/a534079/potd-coronation-streets-faye-windass-faces-police-questioning.html [accessed 16th April 2014].

Kleiman, S. (2004). 'Phenomenology: to wonder and search for meanings', *Nurse Researcher* 11(4), pp.7-19.

Kowalski, R. and Fedina, C. (2011). 'Cyberbullying in ADHD and Asperger Syndrome population', *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 5(1), pp.1201-1208.

Kowalski, R. and Limber, S. (2007). 'Electronic Bullying Among Middle School Students', *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 41(6), pp.22-30.

Kowalski, R., Limber, S. and Agatston, P. (2008). 'Cyberbullying: Bullying in the Digital Age'. 2008. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Kwan, G. and Skoric, M. (2013). 'Facebook bullying: An extension of battles in school', *Computers in Human Behaviour,* 29(1), pp.16-25.

Law, D., Shapka, J., Domene, J. and Gagné, M. (2012). 'Are Cyberbullies really bullies? An investigation of reactive and proactive online aggression', *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 28(2), pp.664-672.

Lewis, M. And Staehler, T. (2010). 'Phenomenology: An introduction'. London: Continuum.

Li, Q. (2006). 'Cyberbullying in schools: A research of gender differences', *School Psychology International*, 27(1), pp.157-170.

Li, Q. (2007a). 'Bullying in the new playground: Research into cyberbullying and cyber victimisation', *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 23(4), pp.435-454.

Li, Q. (2007b). 'New bottle but old wine: A research of cyberbullying in schools', *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 23(4), pp.1777 – 1791.

Li, Q. (2007c). 'The Relationship between Cyberbullying and School Bullying', *Journal of Student Wellbeing*, 1(2), pp.15-33.

Li, Q. (2010). 'Cyberbullying in High Schools: A Study of Students' Behaviours and Beliefs about this New Phenomenon', *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, 19(4), pp.372-392.

Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E. (1985). 'Naturalistic Inquiry'. California: Sage

Publications.

Lindsay, M. Krysik, J. (2012). 'Online Harassment Among College Students', *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(5), pp.703-719.

Luft, S. and Overgaard, S. (Eds.) (2010). 'The Routledge Companion to Phenomenology'. London: Routledge.

Machmutow, K., Perren, S., Sticca, F. and Alsaker, F. (2012). 'Peer victimisation and depressive symptoms: can specific coping strategies buffer the negative impact of cybervictimisation?', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 17(3), pp.403-420.

Mackay, G., Carey, T. and Stevens, B. (2011). 'The Insider's Experience of Long-Term Peer Victimisation', *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 21(2), pp.154-174.

Mark, L. and Ratliffe, K. (2011). 'Cyber Worlds: New Playgrounds for Bullying', *Computers in the Schools*, 28(2), pp.92-116.

Matyszczyk, C. (2009). 'Teen becomes first jailed in UK for cyberbullying' [Online]. Available at http://news.cnet.com/8301-17852_3-10315030-71.html [accessed 21st August 2013].

McDougall, L. (1999). 'A Study of Bullying in Further Education', *Pastoral Care in Education: An International Journal of Personal, Social and Emotional Development*, 17(2), pp.31-37.

McLaughlin, C. Byers, R. and Oliver, C. (Eds.) (2012). 'Perspectives on Bullying and Difference: Supporting young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities in schools'. London: National Children's Bureau.

McLoughlin, C., Meyricke, R., and Burgess, J. (2009). 'Bullies in cyberspace: how rural and regional Australian youth perceive the problem of cyberbullying and its impact'. ISFIRE Symposium Proceedings, pp.178 – 186.

Menesini, E. and Spiel, C. (2012). 'Introduction: Cyberbullying: Development, consequences, risk and protective factors', *European Journal of Developmental*

Psychology, 9(2), pp.163-167.

Mishna, F., Cook, C., Gadalla, T., Daciuk, J. and Solomon, S. (2010). 'Cyber Bullying Behaviours Among Middle and High School Students', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 80(3), pp.362 – 374.

Munro, E. (2011). 'The protection of children online: a brief scoping review to identify vulnerable groups' [Online] Available from http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/content/childnet/safterinternetcentre/downloads/Research_Highlights/Munro_OnlinevulnerabilityReporttoDFE-Final-October2011.pdf [accessed 12th April 2014].

Myers, C. and Cowie, H. (2013). 'University students' views on bullying from the perspective of different participant roles', *Pastoral Care in Education: An International Journal of Personal, Social and Emotional Development*, 31(3), pp.251-267.

National Children's Bureau (NCB) (2009). 'Cyberbullying: Addressing the issue in colleges'. London: NCB.

National Children's Home (NCH). (2005). 'Putting U in the picture - Mobile phone bullying survey' [Online]. Available from http://www.avaproject.org.uk/media/28482/mobile_bullying_report.pdf [accessed 13th Oct 2013].

Noret, N. and Rivers, I. (2006). 'The prevalence of bullying by text message or email: the results of a four-year study', Conference Presentation at the British Psychological Society, Annual Conference, Cardiff.

Norman, J. and Connolly, J. (2011). 'Mimetic theory and scapegoating in the age of cyberbullying: the case of Phoebe Prince', *Pastoral Care in Education,* 29(4), pp287-300.

Obermann, M. (2011). 'Moral Disengagement Among Bystanders to School Bullying', *Journal of School Violence*, 10(3), pp.239–257.

O'Brien, C. (2011). 'Young people's comparisons of cross-gender and same-gender bullying in British secondary schools', *Educational Research*, 53(3),

pp.257-301.

O'Brien, N. and Moules, T. (2013). 'Not sticks and stones but tweets and texts: findings from a national cyberbullying project', *Pastoral Care in Education*, 31(1), pp.53-65.

OFCOM (2012). 'Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report' [Online]. Available from http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/oct2012/main.pdf [accessed 13th March 2013].

Office of the Children's Commissioner (2015). 'Anne Longfield: My first week as Children's Commissioner and my immediate priorities' [Online]. Available from http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/news/anne-longfield-my-first-week-childrens-commissioner-and-my-immediate-priorities [Accessed 5 Aug 2015].

Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2011a). 'Internet Access – Households and Individuals' [Online]. Available from http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rdit2/internet-access---households-and-individuals/2013/stb-ia-2013.html [accessed 17th April 2013].

Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2011b). 'Measuring Sexual Identity': An Evaluation Report September 2010' [Online]. Available from http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/measuring-equality/equality/sexual-identity-project/measuring-sexual-identity--an-evaluation-report.pdf [accessed 31st December 2014].

Ofsted (2012). 'No place for bullying: how schools create a positive culture and prevent and tackle bullying' [Online]. Available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110179 [accessed 2nd March 2013].

Olweus, D. (1978). 'Aggression in the schools: Bullies and whipping boys'. Washington: Wiley.

Olweus, D. (1993). 'Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do'. Oxford: Blackwell.

Olweus, D. (1999). In Smith, P., Morita, Y., Junger-Tas, J., Olweus, D., Catalano, R. and Slee, P. (Eds.). 'The nature of school bullying: A cross-national perspective'. (pp.28-48). London: Routledge.

Olweus. D. (2012a): 'Cyberbullying: An overrated phenomenon? *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 9(5), pp.520-538.

Olweus, D. (2012b). 'Comments on cyberbullying article: A rejoinder', *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 9(5), pp.559-568.

Omizo, M., Omizo, S., Baxa, G. and Miyose, R. (2006). Bullies and Victims: A Phenomenological Study, *Journal of School Violence*, 5(3), p89-105.

Oppenheim, A. (1992). 'Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement'. London: Pinter.

Opposing Views (2012). 'Jessica Laney, 16, Hangs Herself After Being Bullied On Ask. FM' [Online]. Available from http://www.opposingviews.com/i/technology/internet/jessica-laney-16-hangs-herself-after-being-bullied-askfm [accessed 4th April 2013].

Paceley, M. and Flynn, K. (2012). 'Media Representations of Bullying Toward Queer Youth: Gender, Race, and Age Discrepancies', *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 9(4), pp.340-356.

Patchin, J. and Hinduja, S. (2006). Bullies Move beyond the Schoolyard: A Preliminary Look at Cyberbullying. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice,* 4(2), pp.148-169.

Pearce, N. Cross, D., Monks, H., Waters, S. and Falconer, S. (2011). 'Current Evidence of Best Practice in Whole-School Bullying Intervention and Its Potential to Inform Cyberbullying Interventions', *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 21(1), pp.1-21.

Perren, S. and Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, E. (2012). 'Cyberbullying and traditional bullying in adolescence: Differential roles of moral disengagement, moral emotions, and moral values', *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 9(2), pp.195-209.

Perren, S. Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, E., Malti, T. and Hymel, S. (2012). 'Moral reasoning and emotion attributions of adolescent bullies, victims, and bully-victims', *British Journal of Developmental Psychology,* 30(4), pp.511-530.

Perry, D. and Pauletti, R. (2011). 'Gender and Adolescent Development', *Journal of Research on Adolescence,* 21(1), pp.61-74.

Phippin, A. (2012). 'Sexting: An Exploration of Practices, Attitudes and Influences' [Online]. Available at http://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/sexting-exploration-practices-attitudes-influences-report-2012.pdf [Accessed 13 Oct 2013].

Plowright, D. (2011). 'Using Mixed Methods: Frameworks for an Integrated Methodology'. London: SAGE Publications.

Pornari, C. and Wood, J. (2010). 'Peer and Cyber Aggression in Secondary School Students: The Role of Moral Disengagement, Hostile Attribution Bias, and Outcome Expectancies', *Aggressive Behaviour,* 36, pp.81 – 94.

Pyżalski, J. (2012). 'From cyberbullying to electronic aggression: typology of the phenomenon', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 17(1), pp.3-4.

Ragani, D. (2013). 'X Factor's Ella Henderson Hits Out At Cyber Bullies, Admits Show Was Like Being 'Trapped In An Intense Bubble'' [Online]. Available from http://www.entertainmentwise.com/news/104027/X-Factors-Ella-Henderson-Hits-Out-At-Cyber-Bullies-Admits-Show-Was-Like-Being-Trapped-In-An-Intense-Bubble- [accessed 12th March 2013].

Raskauskas, J. and Stoltz, A. (2007). 'Involvement in traditional and electronic bullying among adolescents', *Developmental Psychology*, 43(3), pp.564–575.

Rayner, C. and Cooper, C. (1997). 'Workplace bullying: myth or reality – can we afford to ignore it?' *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 18(4), pp.211-214.

Rayner, C., Sheehan. M. and Barker, M. (1999). 'Theoretical approaches to the study of bullying at work', *International Journal of Manpower*, 20(2), pp.11-15.

Riebel, J., Jager, R. and Fischer, U. (2009). 'Cyberbullying in Germany – an exploration of prevalence, overlapping with real life bullying and coping strategies', *Psychology Science Quarterly*, 51(3), pp.298 – 314.

Rigby, K. (2004). 'Addressing bullying in schools: theoretical perspectives and their implications'. *School Psychology International, 25*(3), pp.287-300.

Rivers, I. and Cowie, H. (2006). 'Bullying and Homophobia in UK Schools: A Perspective of Factors Affecting Resilience and Recovery', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education,* 3(4), pp.11-43.

Rivers, I. and Noret, N. (2010). 'I h7 u': findings from a five-year study of text and email bullying', *British Educational Research Journal*, 36(4), pp.643-671.

Rivituso, G. (2014). 'Cyberbullying Victimisation among College Students: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, *Journal of Information Systems Education,* 25(1) pp.71-75.

Robson, C. (1993). 'Real world research: a resource of social scientists and practitioner-researchers'. Oxford: Blackwell.

Roekel, E., Scholte, R. and Didden, R. (2010). 'Bullying Among Adolescents With Autism Spectrum Disorders: Prevalence and Perception', *Autism Development Disorder*, 40(1), pp.63-73.

Rogers, V (2010). 'Cyberbullying: activities to help children and teens to stay safe in a texting, twittering, social networking world.' London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Ryan, T., Kariuki, M. and Yilmaz, H. (2011). A comparative analysis of cyberbullying perceptions of pre-service educators: Canada and Turkey, *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 10(3), pp.1-12.

Sabella, R. (2009). 'Cyberbullying: who, what, where, why, and what now', *Counselling and Human Development*, 41(8), pp.1-14.

Samnani, A. (2013). '"Is this bullying?" Understanding target and witness reactions', *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 28(3), pp.290-305.

Sanders, P. (1982). 'Phenomenology: A New Way of Viewing Organizational Research' *The Academy of Management Review*, 7(3), pp.353-360.

Seals, D. and Young, J. (2003). 'Bullying and victimization: Prevalence and relationship to gender, grade level, ethnicity, self-esteem, and depression', *Adolescence*, 38(152), pp.735-747.

Ševčíková, M., Šmahel, D. and Otavová, M. (2012). 'The perception of cyberbullying in adolescent victims', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 17(3), pp.319-328.

Shariff, S. (2008). 'Cyberbullying: Issues and solutions for the school, the classroom and the home'. London: Routledge.

Sharp, S. and Smith, K. (1991). 'Bullying in UK schools: the DES Sheffield Bullying Project', *Early Child Development and Care*, 77, pp.47-55.

Shenton, A. (2004).'Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects', *Education for Information*, 22(1), pp.63-75.

Slonje, R. and Smith, P. (2008). 'Cyberbullying: Another main type of bullying?' *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 49(1), pp.147–154.

Slonje, R., Smith, P. and Frisén, A. (2012). 'Processes of cyberbullying, and feelings of remorse by bullies: A pilot study', *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 9(2), pp244-259.

Slonje, R. Smith, P. and Frisén, A. (2013). 'The nature of cyberbullying, and strategies for prevention', *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 29(1), pp.26–32.

Solberg, M. and Olweus, D. (2003). Prevalence Estimation of School Bullying With the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire, *Aggressive Behavior,* 29, pp.239-268.

Stanglin, D. (2013). Arrest of 3 teens in assault, suicide opens raw rounds' [Online]. Available from http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2013/04/12/cyberbullying-sexual-assault-suicide-san-jose-arrest-teens/2076825/ [accessed 3rd March 2014].

Smith, P.K. (1997). Bullying in schools: The UK experience and the Sheffield Anti-Bullying Project, *The Irish Journal of Psychology*, 18(2), pp.191-201.

Smith, P.K., del Barrio, C. and Tokunaga, R. (2013). Definitions of Bullying and Cyberbullying: How Useful Are the Terms? In Bauman, S., Cross, D., and Walker, J. (Eds.) (2013). 'Principles of Cyberbullying Research: Definitions, Measures, and Methodology'. London: Routledge, pp. 26-40.

Smith, P.K., Madsen, K. and Moody, J. (1999). 'What cause the age decline in reports of being bullied at school? Towards a developmental analysis of risks of being bullied', *Educational Research*, 41, pp.267-285.

Smith, P.K, Mahdavi, J., Carvalho, M. and Tippett, N. (2006). 'An investigation into cyberbullying: its forms, awareness and impact, and the relationship between age and gender in cyberbullying,' [Online]. Available from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/RBX03-06.pdf [accessed 10th May 2013].

Smith, P.K, Mahdavi, J., Carvalho, M., Fisher, S., Russell, S. and Tippett, N. (2008). 'Cyberbullying: its nature and impact in secondary school pupils'. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry*. 49(4), pp.376 – 385.

Snell, P. and Englander, E. (2010). 'Victimization and Behaviours Among Girls: Applying Research Findings in the Field', *Journal of Social Sciences,* 6(4), pp.510-514.

Sticca, F. and Perren, S. (2013). Is Cyberbullying Worse than Traditional Bullying? Examining the Differential Roles of Medium, Publicity, and Anonymity for the Perceived Severity of Bullying, *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 42, pp. 730-750.

Stoel, C. (2011). 'Cyber Bullying and the Classroom', *Colleagues*, 6(2), pp.p4-5.

Stonewall (2014). 'How many lesbian, gay and bisexual people are there?' [Online]. Available from

http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_home/sexual_orientation_faqs/2694.asp [accessed 31st December 2014].

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (2008). 'Basics of qualitative research'. Third Edition. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Strom, P. and Strom, R. (2005). 'Cyberbullying by Adolescents: A Preliminary Assessment', *The Education Forum,* 70(3), pp.21-32.

Sutton, J. (2001). 'Bullies, Thugs or Thinkers?' *The Psychologist*, 14(10), pp.530-534.

Tarapdar, S. and Kellett, M. (2011). 'Young people's voices on cyberbullying: what can age comparisons tell us?' London: Diana Award.

Tashakkori, A. and Teddie, C. (Eds.) (2003). 'Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research'. California: Sage Publications.

The Mirror (2012). 'Come home daddy, Lily misses you': Girlfriend of missing teenage dad Anthony Stubbs in emotional appeal for his return' [Online]. Available at http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/anthony-stubbs-girlfriend-of-missing-teenage-1512474 [Accessed 13 Jan 2013].

The Times (2014). Case study: 'Those who bullied my son have their lives ahead of them' [Online]. Available at http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/technology/internet/article3992556.ece [accessed 21st May 2014].

Thornberg. R. and Knutsen, S. (2011). 'Teenagers' Explanations of Bullying', *Child Youth Care Forum,* 40, pp.177–192.

Thornberg, R., Rosenqvist, R. and Johansson, P. (2012). 'Older Teenagers' Explanations of Bullying', *Child Youth Care Forum*, 41(4), pp.327–342.

Thurrock Gazette (2011). 'Cyberbullying pain of transgender teen' [Online]. Available from http://www.thurrockgazette.co.uk/news/8811783.Cyber_bullying_pain_of_transgender_teen/ [accessed 16th May 2013].

Tokunaga, R. (2010). 'Following you home from school: A critical review and synthesis of research on cyberbullying victimisation', *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 26(3), pp.277-287.

Ttofi, M.M, Farrington, D.P and Losel, F. (2012). School bullying as a predictor of violence in later life: a systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective longitudinal studies, *Aggression and Violent Behavior,* 17, pp. 405-418.

Underwood, M. and Rosen, L. (2010). 'Gender and Bullying: Moving Beyond Mean Level Differences to Consider Conceptions of Bullying, Processes by which Bullying Unfolds, and Cyber Bullying.' In Espelage, D. and Swearer, S. (Eds.), *Bullying in North American Schools*, (Second Edition, pp.13-22).

Varjas, K., Talley J., Meyers, J., Parris, L. and Cutts, H. (2010). 'High School Students' Perceptions of Motivations for Cyberbullying: An Exploratory Study', *Western Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 11(3), pp.269 – 273.

Van der Valk, A. (2013). 'There Are No Bullies' [Online]. Available from http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-45-fall-2013/there-are-no-bullies [accessed 23rd May 2014].

Vandoninck, S. d'Haenens, L. and Roe, K. (2012). 'Online Risks', *Journal of Children and Media*, 7(1), pp.60-78.

Vazsonyi, A., Machackova, H., Sevclkova, D. and Cerna, A. (2012). 'Cyberbullying in context: Direct and indirect effects by low self-control across 25 European countries', *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 9(2), pp.210-227.

Weiner, B. (1974). '*Achievement motivation and attribution theory'*. New Jersey: General Learning Press.

Weiner B. (1985). An attribution theory of achievement motivation and emotion, *Psychological Review*, 92(4), 548-573.

West, D. 2012. "Prevalence of Cyberbullying amongst Students Aged 16 – 19 in Further Education." Paper presented at the University of Birmingham School of Education Research Conference, "Championing Research, Educating

Professionals: How Compatible are Elitism, Inclusion and Social Justice?", Birmingham, UK, December.

Whitney, I. and Smith, P. (1993). 'A survey of the nature and extent of bullying in junior / middle and secondary schools', *Educational Research*, 35, pp.3-25.

Wiersma, W. (2008). 'Research Methods in Education: An Introduction'. Ninth Edition. London: Pearson Education.

Willard, N. (2004). 'Educator's Guide to Cyberbullying: Addressing the harm caused by online social cruelty' [Online]. Available from http://www.asdk12.org/middlelink/avb/bully_topics/educatorsguide_cyberbullying.pdf [accessed 21st Sept 2013].

Willard, N. (2007). 'Educator's Guide to Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats' [Online]. Available from https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/School-Safety/Safe-and-Supportive-Learning/Anti-Harassment-Intimidation-and-Bullying-Resource/Educator-s-Guide-Cyber-Safety.pdf.aspx [accessed 17th March 2012].

Wilton, W. and Campbell, M. (2011). 'An exploration of the reasons why adolescents engage in traditional and cyber bullying', *Journal of Educational Sciences and Psychology*, 1(2), pp.101-109.

Wingate, V., Minney, J. and Guadagno, R. (2013). 'Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will always hurt you: a review of cyberbullying', *Social Influence*, 8(2), pp.87-106.

Wong-Lo, M., Bullock, L. and Gable, R. (2011). 'Cyber bullying: practices to face digital aggression', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 16(3), pp.317-325.

Yang, S. (2012). 'Paths to bullying in online gaming: the effects of gender, preference for playing violent games, hostility, and aggressive behaviour on bullying', *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 47(3), pp.249-249.

Ybarra, M. and Mitchell, K. (2004). 'Online aggressor / targets, aggressors, and targets: a comparison of associated youth characteristics', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45, pp.1308–1316.

Appendices

Appendix A Ethical Approval Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK
Institute of
EDUCATION

Application for Ethical Approval for Research Degrees
(MA by research, MPHIL/PhD, EdD)

Name of student:	Dean Edward West
Project title:	An investigation into the emerging aspects of cyberbullying in post-16 contexts
Supervisor:	Professor Sonia Blandford
Funding Body	Full Chancellor's Scholarship / ESRC Research Support Grant / Doctoral Training Centre

still ?

Please ensure you have read the Guidance for the Ethical Conduct of Research available in the handbook.

Methodology
The research instruments employed in this study will be online questionnaires, interviews with college staff (teaching and management), and student focus groups. Focus groups will also be conducted with parents. The questionnaire will use both open and closed questions. Interviews and focus groups will be completed after the questionnaire has been completed.

Participants
Questionnaire and focus group participants will be students aged 16 – 19 in post-16 institutions in England. Parents of students of this age group studying in these institutions will also be invited to attend focus groups. Participants may be selected based on geographic or demographic characteristics, the extent to which will depend on the responses in the questionnaire. Where this is the case, advice will be sought from the ethical guidelines and in conjunction with staff and parents.

Respect for participants' rights and dignity
The rights and dignity of participants are paramount and fundamental in this study. Questionnaires will be anonymous (at no time will the name of the participant be required). Focus groups and interviews with all participants will be confidential (each participant will be given a coded number and therefore participants will not be identifiable). The cultural and religious values are not a core or peripheral part of this research focus, however, should there be an opportunity or should it arise naturally, then values shall be respected. In any case, it shall be stated in the instructions to participants that they should respect diverse opinions made in good faith and cultural and religious beliefs.

Support for research participants

The nature of the topic (cyberbullying) can be a sensitive issue, especially for victims and perpetrators. It is intended, through the data collection process, to ask victims (in the questionnaire and focus groups) to recall / state what happened in an incident, or to summarise the events that take place. In the preamble to the questionnaire, and again at the end, there will be contact details of national helplines and internet pages where participants can refer to, and for those affected to discuss their concerns with a trusted adult at their school (teacher, counsellor, etc). It is not the intention of the researcher to cause upset or other negative emotions during the research process, and this is not an aim of the research or a feature of it. Students will be asked, however, to state how an incident made them feel. If issues are raised or a participant becomes upset, then the correct procedure will be followed specific to the institution that the research is being conducted in.

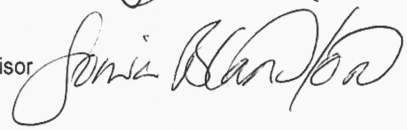
Integrity

The aim of this research is to highlight the nature and extent of cyberbullying in further education contexts. A set of questions used for questionnaires, interviews and focus groups will be developed and checked by the research committee for appropriateness before they are used. Responses will be collated (automatically by the use of an online questionnaire) and focus groups and interviews will be recorded and transcribed. What is recorded collected with the research instruments is what will be recorded and there is no intention to deceive or manipulate the participants or research findings. The research will be of use to many stakeholders and the researcher will be compromising his own integrity if any misleading information is included. Using questionnaires, focus groups and interviews will triangulate findings, reducing misleading responses and therefore publication of results that lack integrity – the sample is anticipated to be large, reducing bias in the results.

What agreement has been made for the attribution of authorship by yourself and your supervisor(s) of any reports or publications?

The PhD thesis will be submitted in the researcher name only. Each paper in the interim period prior to submission of the thesis will be discussed on an individual basis. The publication of the paper based on the researcher's findings at MA level was published in both names due to the added value of the researcher's supervisor.

Research student  Date 28/01/13.

Supervisor  Date 28/01/13

Action

Please submit to the Research Office (Louisa Hopkins, room WE132)

Action taken

- [x] Approved
- [ ] Approved with modification or conditions – see below
- [ ] Action deferred. Please supply additional information or clarification – see below

Name G LINDSAY Date 26.3.13

Signature

Stamped

Notes of Action

Is Smca still supervisor?

Appendix B Questionnaire

Information for Questionnaire Participants

Welcome to the 'National Cyberbullying Survey for Colleges'. I am a Doctoral Researcher at The University of Warwick studying for a PhD in Education. I would be extremely grateful for around 10 minutes of your time to complete this questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information from students in colleges in England about cyberbullying. You will not be paid to take part in this research, but your participation is valued in this under-researched area.

Your responses to this questionnaire will be confidential and you will remain anonymous (you will not be asked to provide your name or contact details). You do not have to answer any question you do not want to, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. If you have any issues or feel affected in any way by the questions you are asked, then please contact a teacher or personal tutor. If you would like to contact me, my email address is dean.west@warwick.ac.uk. The information you provide in the questionnaire will be analysed as a whole and will contribute towards my thesis, and may be presented at conferences and published in journal articles. If you wish to be notified of the results of this research, then these will be available through your college after the project has been completed in July 2014.

'Cyberbullying' has been defined as "the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others."

You may have your own definition of cyberbullying and what constitutes it, which is fine. An example of cyberbullying is if someone has sent nasty text messages or targets another person on a social networking site, which causes that person to be upset. Other ways that cyberbullying can occur is if someone has posted an image or video without that person's permission, and this has caused them to be upset.

Please read each question carefully and respond in an honest way.

It is important when answering the questions that you only take into account the period since you started sixth form or college.

Thank you for your time. Please now proceed to complete the questions that follow.

Dean West

Doctoral Researcher

The University of Warwick

Question No.	Research Question	Question and Response Options
1	Groups	**Are you male or female?**
		Male
		Female
2	Groups	**How old are you?**
		Below 16
		16
		17
		18
		19
		Above 19
3	Not Analysed	**What type of qualification are you studying for?**
		AS / A levels
		Vocational course including BTEC and HNC/HND
		Other (Please Specify)
4	Groups	**How would you define your ethnic origin?**
		Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi
		Asian or Asian British - Chinese
		Asian or Asian British - Indian
		Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
		Asian - Any other Asian Background
		Black or Black British - African
		Black or Black British - Caribbean
		Black - Any other Black Background
		Mixed - Asian and Black
		Mixed - Asian and White
		Mixed - Black and White
		Mixed - Any other Mixed Background
		White - British
		White - Irish
		White - Traveller or Roma Gypsy
		White - Any other White Background
		Other (Please Specify)
5	Groups	**Do you receive any financial assistance from your college e.g. 'Learner Support Fund' or 'Free College Meals'?**
		Yes
		No
6	Overview	**How many hours in a typical day do you spend using a mobile phone or computer?**
		0 - 2 hours per day
		2 - 4 hours per day
		4 - 6 hours per day
		6 - 8 hours per day
		8 - 10 hours per day
		10 or more hours per day
7	Overview	**Which of the following do you own / have access to? (Select all that apply)**
		A social networking account (e.g. Facebook / Twitter, etc)
		A mobile phone (without internet access)

		A 'smart' mobile phone (with internet access and camera)
		A laptop / desktop computer (without internet access)
		A laptop / desktop computer (with internet access)
		An Ipad (or other tablet) computer
8	Groups	**Do you have any of the following? (Answer Yes or No)**
		A physical disability
		A learning disability (Autism / Aspergers)
		A learning disability (Dyslexia, literacy or numeracy issues)
9	Groups	**How do you define your sexual orientation?**
		Heterosexual (attraction towards the opposite sex)
		Homosexual (attraction towards the same sex)
		Bisexual (attraction towards both sexes)
		Other (Please Specify)
10	Groups	**Do you have a criminal record, been arrested or cautioned, or have you committed a crime?**
		Yes
		No
11	Not analysed	**Cyberbullying is a normal part of the online world. There is nothing anyone can do to stop it.'**
		(Select how far you agree / disagree with this statement)
		Strongly agree
		Somewhat agree
		Neither agree nor disagree
		Somewhat disagree
		Strongly disagree
12	Prevalence	**Have you been cyberbullied since being a college student?**
		Yes
		No
13	Prevalence	**Have you been physically or verbally been bullied since being a student?**
		Yes
		No
14	Prevalence	**Did you suffer any of the following at secondary school? (Answer Yes or No)**
		Cyberbullying
		Physical or verbal bullying
15	Overview	**Please answer 'yes' or 'no' to the following questions.**
		Do you think cyberbullying is a problem at your college?
		Do you think physical or verbal bullying is a problem at your college?
		Do you worry about being a victim of cyberbullying?
		Do you know someone who has been cyberbullied?
16	Not analysed	**How often have you witnessed cyberbullying whilst being a college student?**
		I have not witnessed cyberbullying whilst being a college student
		Rarely
		Occasionally
		Frequently
17	Groups	**Which gender do you think is involved in cyberbullying more as…**
		Victims
		Boys
		Girls
		Neither / equal amounts

		Bullies
		Boys
		Girls
		Neither / equal amounts
18	Groups	**If you have chosen girls or boys being more involved as victims or bullies, then please state why you think this.**
		Open Response
19	Not analysed	**Do you think that cyberbullying should be a criminal offence in the UK?**
		Yes
		No
20	Not analysed	**Do you think your college is doing enough to tackle cyberbullying?**
		Yes
		No
		Maybe
21	Not analysed	**Have you covered cyberbullying in a tutorial session at your college?**
		Yes
		No
22	Not analysed	**Do you know where to find the anti-bullying policy at your college?**
		Yes
		No
23	Not analysed	**How effective do you think each of the following might work as methods of prevention for cyberbullying?**
		Ban the use of mobile phones at college
		Ban the use of computers (with internet access) at college
		Tutorials that raise awareness of cyberbullying in colleges
		Anti-bullying policy that students know about
		Training for all college staff
		Competitions such as creating posters and DVD clips
		Lessons on e-safety, 'netiquette' and using technology sensibly and safety
24	Not analysed	**How effective do you think each of the following might work as methods of response to cyberbullying?**
		Very effective, Slightly effective, Slightly ineffective, Very ineffective
		The college should punish the cyberbully
		The college should help the cyberbully
		The college should punish the cybervictim
		The college should help the the cybervictim
		The victim should block the cyberbully from buddy / friends lists
		The victim should report it to the college
		The victim should report it to the police / mobile network / internet service provider
		The victim should retaliate / get their own back on the cyberbully
		The victim should ask the cyberbully to stop
		The victim should change their mobile number / email address
25	Prevalence	**Have you cyberbullied anyone since being a college student? (Include incidents inside or outside of college, and to anyone)**
		Yes
		No
26	Prevalence	**Have you physically or verbally bullied anyone since being a college student?**
		Yes
		No
27	Prevalence	**You have identified yourself as being cyberbullied whilst being a college student.**

		Could you please briefly outline in the space below outline what happened?
		Open Response
28	Prevalence	**On how many occasions have you been cyberbullied while being a college student?**
		1
		2 - 3
		4 - 6
		7 - 10
		More than 10
29	Prevalence	**Where did the cyberbullying take place?**
		Inside college
		Outside college
		Both inside and outside college
30	Prevalence	**How long did the cyberbullying last?**
		It was a one-off and lasted a day only
		Between one day and one week
		Between one week and one month
		Between one month and six months
		Between six months and one year
		More than one year
31	Reasons	**Did any of the following have anything to do with the cyberbullying you experienced? (Answer Yes or No)**
		Physical Disability
		Learning Disability
		Physical appearance (looks, height, weight, etc)
		Sexual Orientation
		Gender
		Intelligence / ability
		Your friendship groups
		Your family
		Religion
		Ethnicity
32	Prevalence	**Who cyberbullied you?**
		Someone at college
		Someone outside college
		Both inside and outside college
		I do not know who cyberbullied me
33	Groups	**Were you cyberbullied by...?**
		All girls
		Mostly girls and some boys
		Boys and girls equally
		Mostly boys and some girls
		All boys
		I do not know the gender of those who cyberbullied me
34	Groups	**How would you define the ethnic origins of the person (people) that cyberbullied you?**
		I do not know the ethnic origin of the person(s) who cyberbullied me
		Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi
		Asian or Asian British - Chinese
		Asian or Asian British - Indian
		Asian or Asian British - Pakistani

		Asian - Any other Asian Background
		Black or Black British - African
		Black or Black British - Caribbean
		Black - Any other Black Background
		Mixed - Asian and Black
		Mixed - Asian and White
		Mixed - Black and White
		Mixed - Any other Mixed Background
		White - British
		White - Irish
		White - Traveller or Roma Gypsy
		White - Any other White Background
		Other (Please Specify)
35	Not analysed	**What was you reaction to being cyberbullied?**
		I retaliated
		I ignored it
		I deleted the message / image / content
		I confronted the cyberbully and told them to stop
		I reported it to an adult at college (teacher, support staff, etc)
		I reported it to an adult at home (parent, carer, guardian, etc)
		I reported it to the internet service provider or mobile phone operator
		I reported it to the police or CEOP
		Other (Please Specify)
36	Consequences	**What feelings did you experience when you were cyberbullied?**
		Sad
		Hurt
		Angry
		Embarrassed
		Afraid
		Anxious
		Isolated
		Depressed
		Suicidal
		I didn't want to go back to college
		Difficulty concentrating
		Self-blame
		Did not bother me at all
		Other (Please Specify)
37	Consequences	**What impact did being cyberbullied have on your overall mental wellbeing / health?**
		No impact at all
		A little impact
		Moderate impact
		Very serious impact
38	Consequences	**Which statement best describes your use of communications technology after you were cyberbullied?**
		I use technology more now compared to when I was cyberbullied
		I use technology the same now compared to when I was cyberbullied
		I use technology less now compared to when I was cyberbullied
39	Consequences	**Please indicate whether the following were adversely affected by your**

		experience(s) of cyberbullying (Answer Yes or No)
		Your learning / academic performance at college
		Your attendance to lessons at college
		Your ability to develop relationships online
		Your ability to develop relationships 'in the real world'
		Your feelings
		Your diet / eating habits
		Your sleeping patterns
40	Not analysed	**Did you tell anybody about being cyberbullied?**
		Yes
		No
41	Prevalence	**You have identified yourself as being a cyberbully while being a college student.**
		Could you please briefly outline in the space below outline what you did?
		Open Response
42	Prevalence	**On how many occasions have you cyberbullied others while being a college student?**
		1
		2 - 3
		4 - 6
		7 - 10
		More than 10
43	Groups	**Who have you cyberbullied?**
		All girls
		Mostly girls and some boys
		Boys and girls equally
		Mostly boys and some girls
		All boys
		I do not know the gender of those I have cyberbullied
44	Consequences	**Did you feel any remorse (regret) after cyberbullying someone?**
		Yes, I felt remorse
		No, I did not feel remorse
45	Reasons	**What reasons did you have for cyberbullying?**
		Fun
		Revenge
		Anger
		Jealous
		Boredom
		Provocation
		Insecurity
		Because others / friends were doing it
		To fit in
		Because of how the person was different (e.g. race, gender, sexuality, disability)
		Because no one would know it was me
		Because of my upbringing / bad children / bad parenting
		For power / status / popularity
		I don't know why I did it
		Other (Please Specify)
46	Reasons	**Which of the following features as reasons for why you cyberbullied someone (Answer Yes or No)**
		Their physical disability

		Their learning disability
		Their physical appearance (looks, height, weight, etc)
		Their sexual orientation
		Their gender
		Their intelligence / ability
		Their friendship groups
		Their family
		Their religion
		Their ethnicity
47	Not analysed	**Who did you tell about the cyberbullying?**
		Teacher at college
		Someone else at college
		Parent / Guardian
		Someone else in your family
		Friends
		Strangers
		Police / CEOP
		Mobile Phone Operator / Internet Service Provider
		Anti-Bullying Helpline / ChildLine
		Other (Please Specify)
48	Not analysed	**What happened after you told those selected in the previous question?**
		It stopped
		It got better
		Nothing changed
		It got worse
49	Not analysed	**What reasons do you have for not telling anyone about the cyberbullying?**
		I thought no one would believe me
		I thought no one would understand
		I thought the college could / would not do anything about it
		I thought I would get in to trouble
		I thought telling someone would make things worse
		I thought my access to my phone / computer would be restricted
		I thought I could deal with the situation myself
		I thought it was no big deal
		Other (Please Specify)
50	Not analysed	**What happened after you decided not to tell anyone about the cyberbullying?**
		It stopped
		It got better
		Nothing changed
		It got worse

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your time and the information you have provided are both greatly appreciated.
Alternatively, you can contact a teacher or other member of staff at your college who can help, or call ChildLine on 0800 1111.
If you wish to report an incident on the internet then visit www.ceop.police.uk to do this.
If you wish to talk about any of the issues raised in the questionnaire, then please contact me at dean.west@warwick.ac.uk.

Thank you, again.

Dean West
Doctoral Researcher
The University of Warwick

Appendix C Interview Consent Form

Hi [INSERT NAME OF POTENTIAL INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT],

Thank you very much for completing the questionnaire on cyberbullying and for emailing me with your interest in participating in a follow up interview. I really appreciate your time, effort and bravery in coming forward as a victim of cyberbullying and I am very much looking forward to interviewing you about your experiences. I must say that interviews with victims of cyberbullying are not common in the research that has been done so far. This means that your commitment is very much appreciated and valued.

The interview is likely to be by phone, unless you are geographically close where I can visit you (this is up to you, though).

I have attached the consent form that I would like you to complete before the interview starts. I can organise a hard copy to be sent for you to sign, so do not worry about that now. Just read it through and let me know whether you still want to get involved after reading it. At this stage, I will organise a time to call / visit.

Could you please let me know the city in which you live? If you have any questions, please let me know. Also, if you know any other victims or bullies of cyberbullying that might want to share their experiences, would you please let me know their name and email address?

If you could reply to me by Friday 4th April, I would be very grateful.

Thank you,

Dean West

Doctoral Researcher

University of Warwick

Consent to Participate in Research

Introduction and Purpose

My name is Dean West. I am a Doctoral Researcher at the Centre for Education Studies, The University of Warwick. I would like to invite you to take part in my research, which relates to cyberbullying in post-16 education. The data collected will contribute towards the research thesis I am completing for my PhD in Education.

Why you have been invited to participate

You have been selected to take part in this study because you have identified yourself as a cyberbully or a cybervictim from a request sent by email to your college asking for cyberbullies or cybervictims to participate.

Do you have to take part?

No. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw at any time for any reason, or without giving a reason.

What would I have to do?

If you agree to participate in my research, I will conduct an interview with you. The interview will involve questions about your experience of cyberbullying as a cyberbully and / or a cybervictim. The interview may be done face-to-face or over the telephone and may be audiotaped. If you do not wish to continue with the interview at any time, just say so and the interview will stop immediately.

Benefits of participating

You will not be paid to take part in this study. However, you will be contributing to an area that is heavily under-researched in relation to cyberbullying. Your participation will help in terms of contributing to theory, policy and practice.

Risks to participating

As part of the interview, you will be asked about your experiences in relation to cyberbullying and may be asked to talk in detail about what happened. It is possible that talking about your experience in this way may cause some distress. Some of the research questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, although this is NOT the intention. You are free to decline to answer any questions you don't wish to, or to stop the interview at any time. You can always talk to someone at school or a counselling service if you need to. If you want me to refer you to someone who can help, or if you would like to talk to me about anything that is concerning you, please let me know.

Your right to privacy

The answers you provide in the interview will be confidential. This means that what you say will not be discussed with anyone else, unless you explicitly provide consent. If the results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. Your name will be changed in the transcriptions and in the results. Absolute confidentially is not guaranteed. This means if you make a disclosure that suggests you are at risk of causing harm to yourself or harm to other people, then this will be disclosed.

To minimise the risks to confidentiality and anonymity, I will keep the data secured and under password protection. I will be the only person to have access to the data, along with the panel of people who will be marking the thesis I submit. I will submit the transcriptions and notes as part of this submission. The audio recordings, if made, and notes will be destroyed when they are no longer needed. Your data will be used and kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

What will happen to the results?

The data from the interview will be analysed and extracts of what you say may appear in my thesis. The thesis will be been by my supervisor and the examination committee. The thesis will also be available for other students to read. The study may be published in a research journal.

Has this study been approved?

Yes. The Ethics Committee at Warwick University has approved this research.

Summarising your rights

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You can choose to decline to take part in the interview. You can decline to answer any question, and you can decide to withdraw at any time. Without giving a reason. There will be no penalty to if you do not agree to take part, not to answer any of the questions, or if you decide to withdraw.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research, please email me at dean.west@warwick.ac.uk

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact my supervisor, Professor Sonia Blandford at Sonia.blandford@afa3as.org.uk

INFORMED CONSENT

Please read and tick the statements if you agree with them. Please sign and date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheets for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. ☐

3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

_____

Participant's Name *(please print)*

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

Appendix D Interview Schedule

The majority of the questions might sound familiar because they are the same or similar to those that you have answered when you did the questionnaire. I do not know which are your responses. This interview is an opportunity to explore in more detail your answers to those questions and to hear, in your own words, the experiences that you have had. You do not have to answer my questions. If there is a question that you do not want to answer, just say, "pass". The interview will not be recorded; I will be making notes instead. Please bear with me if I pause to write things down or ask you repeat what you have said if required. Your name will not appear in the results. Are you okay to continue the interview?

1. How old are you?
2. What city are you from?
3. What are you studying at college?
4. What about your ethnic origin?
5. What would you like to be when you are older?
6. Have you been a victim of **cyberbullying** while at college?
7. **Can you tell me in as much detail what happened? I may have some questions afterwards to explore your experiences in more detail.**
8. How many occasions?
9. When did it happen? (Time of year – how long ago?)
10. How long did it last for?
11. What was the gender of those who cyberbullied you?
12. What was the ethnicity?
13. Where did it take place
14. Through what medium?
15. What was the cyberbullying to do with?
16. Do you know who cyberbullied you?
17. What impact did the cyberbullying have on your education? Feelings? Social integration? Mental well-being? Attendance? Eating? Sleeping?
18. Does it still upset you now?
19. Why did the person cyberbully you? What reasons were given?
20. Do you have any physical disabilities or learning difficulties?

21. Have you been a victim of **traditional (physical / verbal) bullying** while at college?
22. Were you a victim of **cyberbullying** while at secondary school?
23. Were you a victim of **traditional (physical / verbal) bullying** while at secondary school?
24. Do you think **cyberbullying** is a problem at your college?
25. Do you think **traditional (physical / verbal) bullying** is a problem at your college?
26. Have you covered cyberbullying in a tutorial at college?
27. Have you covered **traditional (physical / verbal) bullying** in a tutorial at college?
28. What do you think might stop cyberbullying (prevention)
29. What do you think is a good response to cyberbullying
30. Did you tell anyone about your experiences of cyberbullying? *Probe either way*
31. How did the cyberbullying end?

Appendix E Pilot Study Questions

1. Were the instructions clear?

2. Were there any mistakes?

3. Were there any questions you did not answer? Which ones? Why?

4. Comment on the order of the questions

5. Is the language clear and understandable?

6. Is the questionnaire well presented and in good appearance and laid out well?

7. Did any of the items require you to think too long or too hard before responding? If so, which ones and why?

8. Did any items produce irritation, embarrassment, or confusion?

9. Is the questionnaire an appropriate length?

10. How long did it take to complete?

Appendix F Email Communication

Appendix F.1 Initial Enquiry

Dear [INSERT NAME OF PRINCIAL / CHIEF EXECUTIVE]

Cyberbullying has become more of a prevalent issue in education and society as a whole, yet it is still under-researched and under-theorised in post-16 settings. As a PhD research student at the Institute of Education, University of Warwick, I am investigating to what extent cyberbullying occurs in post-16 education. In my concurrent role as a teacher and manager at a sixth form college, I know that more needs to be done in this context to be able to deal with the issue. I am writing to invite your college to participate in a national survey on cyberbullying in post-16 contexts.

The purpose of the study is to collect data from students in post-16 institutions on the ever-changing problem of cyberbullying. This is the first study in this context on this scale and I very much hope you will get involved. The title of my thesis is "An investigation into the phenomenon of cyberbullying: a mixed-methods study with specific focus on students aged 16 – 19 in post-compulsory education contexts." The survey I have prepared for this research, the "National Cyberbullying Survey for Colleges" will run during March 2014. This will be an electronic questionnaire to students and will take around 10 minutes to complete. Following the questionnaire data collection, colleges will be sent a request for further engagement in relation to interviews. Your participation into this heavily under-researched area is greatly appreciated.

The survey has been designed to cause minimum administrative input from your staff and little disruption to your schedules. All that is required by your institution is to email out to students the link I send to you closer to the data collection period and encourage completion of the questionnaire before the deadline. If you would prefer me to write to a delegated member of staff, please provide me with their email address. If you choose not to participate, then please email me at dean.west@warwick.ac.uk and indicate a reason why as this will be useful for evaluating the study.

Instructions for participants will be embedded in the questionnaire. The questionnaire has already been successfully piloted. The results of the questionnaire, as well as the analysis of the results and subsequent publication and dissemination of the results, will at no point identify individual colleges or participants. A thorough and secure coding procedure will be used to ensure this, although individual colleges can request a coded version of their own results and the results of the whole study.

I would like to reassure you that the Ethical Approval Committee at The University of Warwick has permitted this research. For your information, my research supervisor is Professor Sonia Blandford, the Founder, CEO, National Director for Achievement for All and Professor of Education at the Institute of Education (London).

If you agree to participate in this study, you need not do anything at this stage. I will write to you again outlining the specific data collection period and the link to email out to students. As a thank you for participating in this survey, you will be sent a copy of an anti-bullying/cyberbullying DVD (that I have personally commissioned), which has specifically been created for, and by, post-16 students. If you have any questions or queries, then please do not hesitate to email me at dean.west@warwick.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Dean West

Doctoral Research Student

University of Warwick

Appendix F.2 Update Details to Participating Colleges

Dear [INSERT NAME OF PRINCIAL / CHIEF EXECUTIVE]

Thank you for agreeing for [INSERT NAME OF COLLEGE] to participate in the 'National Cyberbullying Survey for Colleges'. Your contribution to this heavily under-researched area, and to this project specifically, is very much appreciated. I am writing to update you on how the survey will be managed and provide information regarding your role in distributing the survey links to students. If you would prefer me to write to a delegated member of staff, please provide me with their email address or kindly forward this email to them.

The specific links to the online questionnaires will be emailed to you the week commencing Monday 24th February 2014. The survey will be open for completion from Saturday 1st March 2014 to Monday 31st March 2014. The questionnaire can be completed at any time during this period, at home or at college. A link will be provided for students and has typically taken between 5 – 10 minutes to complete.

As highlighted in my last email, the survey has been designed to cause minimum administrative input from your staff and little disruption to your schedule. All that is required is for you to email out to students the link I send to you before the data collection period begins and to encourage completion of the questionnaire before the deadline. You may wish to consider booking computer rooms with students during tutorial time as a way of increasing participation rates, although this is not a stipulation and I will be interested on hearing how you manage this process yourself.

Information and instructions for participants are already embedded in the questionnaire (including informed consent and ethical information). The results of the questionnaire, as well as the analysis of the results and subsequent publication and dissemination of the results, will at no point identify individual colleges or participants.

During April and May 2014, there will be follow-up interviews (either in person or by telephone) with selected student participants. A request for further engagement will be sent at a later stage in respect of this to invite any students wanting to get involved in this stage. Those asked to participate would identify themselves as bullies and / or victims of cyberbullying and there is no obligation to participate.

I would like to reassure you that the Ethical Approval Committee at The University of Warwick has permitted this research. For your information, my research supervisor is Professor Sonia Blandford, the Founder, CEO and National

Director for Achievement for All, and Professor of Education and Social Enterprise at the London Institute of Education.

If, however, you now feel [INSERT NAME OF COLLEGE] cannot participate in this research, then please email me at dean.west@warwick.ac.uk and indicate a reason why as this will be useful for evaluating the study. If you have any questions or queries, then please do not hesitate to email me. Otherwise, I will write to you again the week commencing Monday 24th February 2014.

Thank you again for your support in this important research.

Yours sincerely,

Dean West

Doctoral Research Student, University of Warwick

Appendix F.3 Notification of Questionnaire Link

Dear [INSERT NAME OF PRINCIAL / CHIEF EXECUTIVE]

Thank you again for your participation in the 'National Cyberbullying Survey for Colleges'. As the data collection window nears, I am writing to you to provide you with the questionnaire link that I would kindly ask you distribute to students. You will find the link to the questionnaires below at the end of this email along with a message to forward to students. All other information and instructions that participants need is embedded within the questionnaire. The questionnaires take between 5 – 10 minutes to complete. You are receiving the link now in order to provide you with time to organise how you disseminate the questionnaire link to students.

As previously advised, the data collection period is from 1st March to 31st March 2014. This link is specific to [INSERT NAME OF COLLEGE]. The results from your college will be aggregated from those with other participating colleges provide national data. I can assure you that the name of your college will NOT appear in the results or any subsequent publication. Furthermore, participants will remain anonymous. You can request summarised results specific to your college from me once the data collection period has closed.

Please check the link works; it should take you to the instructions page for each questionnaire. If the link does not appear to work, please let me know as soon as possible so I can investigate this.

I would ask that you distribute the link to students as close to the beginning of the month as possible and encourage students to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire can be completed at any time during March, so if you are not able to organise a dedicated session in which students can complete the questionnaire, then please encourage them to do it in their own time. To increase participation rates and representativeness of the sample, I would be grateful, wherever possible, that students completed the questionnaire in a dedicated session at college, but I do appreciate that this may not be possible.

I will send follow-up emails periodically throughout March as a reminder of the survey and to encourage students to complete the questionnaire. Furthermore, I will be writing to invite colleges to engage in the second stage of the research, which will involve interviews with students (specifically those who have identified themselves as a bully or victim of cyberbullying).

May I thank you once again for engaging in this area of important research – your participation really will make a difference to the creation and development of theory, practice and policy in this heavily under-researched context.

As always, if you have any questions or queries, please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Dean West

Doctoral Researcher, University of Warwick

LINK TO QUESTIONNAIRE TO SEND TO STUDENTS

Dear Student,

I am a Doctoral Researcher at The University of Warwick studying for a PhD in Education. I would be extremely grateful for around 5 - 10 minutes of your time to complete this questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information from students in colleges in England about cyberbullying. Your responses to this questionnaire will be anonymous. You will be contributing to a heavily under-researched area and your participation is very much appreciated. Please click on the link below to complete the questionnaire.

[INSERT QUESTIONNAIRE LINK]

Thank you for your time.

Dean West

Doctoral Researcher

The University of Warwick

Appendix F.4 Reminder Email and Request for Interviews

Dear [INSERT NAME OF PRINCIAL / CHIEF EXECUTIVE]

Last week I wrote to you to inform you that 2,100 students had completed the cyberbullying questionnaire from 34 colleges. Today this figure is just over 5,100 from around 40 colleges. Thank you very much for your participation in this study – the data collection window is still open until the 31st March, so please do continue to encourage students to complete the questionnaires.

My main reason for writing on this occasion, as highlighted in my email to you last week, is to invite students who have identified themselves as a cyberbully or cybervictim for a short interview (either face-to-face or telephone depending on location). As the questionnaire is anonymous, I did not collect any personal or contact details from participants. As such, I am asking for your help one final time.

I would be very grateful if you could email students the email message below about the qualitative stage of the study. If you could do this by Wednesday 26th March, I would be most grateful. I have developed an informed consent form with details of confidentiality and anonymity and this is available on request. I will contact each student personally when they write to me indicating they would like to take part in an interview. Interviews will then take place during April and May. If you would like more details on this stage of the research, then please do let me know.

As always, if you have any questions or queries, please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Dean West

Doctoral Researcher, University of Warwick

Email message to forward to students about participation in the interview stage of this study

Dear Student,

Following the questionnaire stage of the National Cyberbullying Survey for Colleges, I am now inviting students to participate in an interview to discuss in detail their experiences of cyberbullying. If you are a cyberbully or cybervictim, and you would like to share your experiences in an interview, then please email me at dean.west@warwick.ac.uk stating you would like to get involved. I will then send you a consent form for you to read. If you are happy to continue then the interview will either be face to face or my telephone (depending on your

preference and your geographical location). I would be grateful if you could email me by Friday 4th April at the latest with your interest. If you require any further information or if you have any questions, please let me know. Interviews with victims, and especially bullies, in colleges are not common and by agreeing to participate you will be contributing knowledge to this important research area.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

Dean West

Doctoral Researcher, University of Warwick

Appendix F.5 Research Update and Reminder of Interviews

Dear [INSERT NAME OF PRINCIAL / CHIEF EXECUTIVE]

Thank you so much for taking part in the cyberbullying survey throughout March. I am very grateful for the time and effort that your students have committed to informing knowledge and understanding in cyberbullying research. I will be spending the next couple of months analysing the data for nearly 6,000 questionnaires from 41 colleges. I am very pleased by the response and thank you again for taking an active part in this project.

I now look forward to the next stage of the research, which involves interviewing victims and bullies of cyberbullying. As the questionnaires are anonymous, I did not collect any personal or contact details from participants. As such, I am asking for your help one final time. Thank you if you have already emailed this out. I have 4 responses so far, but ideally would like this to rise to 10 students in total.

I would be very grateful if you could email students the email message below about the qualitative stage of the study. I have developed an informed consent form with details of confidentiality and anonymity and this is available on request. I will contact each student personally when they write to me indicating they would like to take part in an interview. Interviews will then take place during April and May. If you would like more details on this stage of the research, then please do let me know.

As always, if you have any questions or queries, please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Dean West

Doctoral Researcher

The University of Warwick

Email message to forward to students about participation in the interview stage of this study

Dear Student,

Following the questionnaire stage of the National Cyberbullying Survey for Colleges, I am now inviting students to interview to discuss in detail their experiences of cyberbullying. If you are a cyberbully or cybervictim, and you would like to share your experiences in an interview, then please email me at dean.west@warwick.ac.uk stating you would like to get involved. I will then send you a consent form for you to read. If you are happy to continue then interviews will either be face to face or my telephone (depending on your preference and

your geographical location). I would be grateful if you could email me by Friday 4th April at the latest with your interest. If you require any further information or if you have any questions, please let me know. Interviews with victims, and especially bullies, of cyberbullying in colleges are not common and by agreeing to participate you will be contributing knowledge to this important research area.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

Dean West

Doctoral Researcher, University of Warwick

Appendix F.6 Notification of Individual College Results and Thanks

Dear [INSERT NAME OF PRINCIAL / CHIEF EXECUTIVE]

Following your involvement in the National Cyberbullying Survey for Colleges, which ran throughout March, I am writing to thank you for your participation in the study, and to provide you with the results for your college, which you will find attached.

Since the questionnaire data collection period ended, I have been conducting interviews with victims of cyberbullying and I am now nearing the end of the data analysis. Once this has been completed, I will write up my findings and report the data through scholarly publications, conferences, anti-bullying charities and local / national government with the aim of contributing to theory, policy and practice in relation to cyberbullying in post-16 contexts, which has been largely overlooked until now. I want to leave you under no illusion – the contribution that your students have made to this area of research is very much appreciated. It is only with – and through – the cooperation of you and your staff (and of course the students themselves) that important data like this can be collected in order to influence and create positive change in our colleges so that students can have the most positive experience possible in our care. Please thank your students on my behalf. As promised, the results for your institution will stay anonymous and only overall results will be reported.

I would like to share with you the following information about the research: 5,690 questionnaires in total from 41 colleges were analysed in this study. The overall prevalence rate of those who had been cyberbullied whilst a college student was 7.9% and those who cyberbullied others was at a rate of 1.6%. It is inappropriate to delve deeper into the significance of the results until the data analysis has been competed. You could use your results to see how you compare to these averages, but do use the data indicatively as each college is different.

I hope the data attached is used by you to inform practice and create positive change within your college. If you would like any further information on the results in general, or those relating to your college, please let me know.

Thank you once again for your involvement in this study.

Best wishes,

Dean West

Doctoral Researcher

The University of Warwick

Appendix G Breakdown of Demographics

Appendix G.1 Ethnicity

Table 52: Breakdown of Questionnaire Participants' Ethnicity

Ethnicity	N	%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	338	5.9
Asian or Asian British - Indian	218	3.8
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	99	1.7
Asian - Any other Asian Background	56	1.0
Asian or Asian British - Chinese	43	0.8
Black or Black British - African	86	1.5
Black or Black British - Caribbean	38	0.7
Black - Any other Black Background	19	0.3
Mixed - Black and White	78	1.4
Mixed - Asian and White	51	0.9
Mixed - Any other Mixed Background	38	0.7
Mixed - Asian and Black	7	0.1
White – British	4290	75.4
White - Any other White Background	167	2.9
White – Irish	39	0.7
White - Traveller or Roma Gypsy	14	0.2
Other (Please Specify)	78	1.4
Not answered	30	0.5
N	**5689**	100.0

Appendix G.2 Ethnicity (Other)

Table 53: Breakdown of Questionnaire Participants' Ethnicity – Other

Other' Ethnicity	N
Arab	10
White - Non-English	9
White - English	8
Polish	5
Persian	4
Filipino and British	3
Kurdish	3
Asian British- Afghani	2
White and Black Caribbean	2
Brown - South African	1
Belgian	1
Greek Cypriot	1
Spanish	1
Hungarian	1
East African Asian	1
Iraqi	1
Turkish	1
Mauritian	1
Somali	1
Asian British - Punjabi	1
Kuwaiti British	1
Middle Eastern	1
Mauritian	1
Asian British-Nepalese	1
Lithuanian	1

Appendix G.3 Type of Qualification Studied

Table 54: 'Other' type of qualification studied

Other' Course Studied	N
Other Vocational	168
Diploma	88
ESOL	72
A level and BTEC	48
GCSE	32
Access to HE/HE Course	27
Apprenticeship	7
IB	7
Total	449

Appendix H College-level Findings

Table 55: College-level details relating to type, response rate, and percentage of cybervictims and cyberbullies

Questionnaire Code	Type of College	No. of responses	No. on roll	Response rate (%)	Cybervictim %	Cyberbully %
195	Special	5	53	0.09	0.0	0.0
350	Special	10	60	0.17	0.0	12.5
129	SFC	804	2137	0.38	4.2	0.6
281	FE	82	2319	0.04	4.3	2.9
410	FE	129	2416	0.05	5.1	3.0
180	SFC	222	2574	0.09	5.4	1.8
268	SFC	609	2122	0.29	5.4	1.1
208	FE	44	4348	0.01	5.6	2.9
316	FE	21	3141	0.01	5.6	5.6
155	FE	169	3557	0.05	5.6	3.9
223	SFC	279	2528	0.11	5.8	0.9
64	SFC	174	1721	0.10	6.2	1.6
241	SFC	335	2256	0.15	6.2	1.0
1	SFC	249	1662	0.15	6.6	0.5
100	SFC	153	2259	0.07	6.7	5.0
70	FE	230	2498	0.09	7.0	2.4
368	FE	275	3886	0.07	8.0	1.2
372	SFC	159	1698	0.09	8.1	4.1
294	FE	34	1778	0.02	8.3	0.0
67	FE	48	1114	0.04	9.1	0.0
284	SFC	88	3118	0.03	9.1	3.6
91	FE	233	1997	0.12	9.9	2.5
416	SFC	51	1731	0.03	10	0.0
163	SFC	208	1335	0.16	10.8	1.8
240	SFC	218	1304	0.17	11.2	1.3
71	FE	368	2071	0.18	11.2	5.0
397	SFC	295	528	0.56	11.3	3.9
206	SFC	193	1586	0.12	11.6	4.5
87	FE	160	1376	0.12	12.2	0.9
349	SFC	150	779	0.19	12.3	2.5
78	FE	77	3300	0.02	12.5	1.9
249	SFC	99	1530	0.07	14.1	1.5
365	FE	67	1125	0.06	14.3	0.0
254	FE	113	2995	0.04	14.5	2.4
187	FE	50	1507	0.03	16.2	3.1
132	FE	51	1192	0.04	13.6	2.5
149	SFC	76	1607	0.05	17.5	4.8
68	FE	66	2035	0.03	19.4	8.8

219	FE	27	4910	0.01	25.0	5.0
278	FE	56	464	0.12	26.5	0.0
361	FE	48	2358	0.02	26.9	12.s5
	Uncleaned	6725	82975	0.08		
	Cleaned	5690		0.07		

Data sorted by 'Cybervictim %', SFC = Sixth Form College, FE = Further Education College

Appendix I Local Authority Details and Mapping

Appendix I.1 Participating Local Authorities

Table 56: College-level details relating to type, response rate, and percentage of cybervictims and cyberbullies

Local Authority Area	No. of colleges participating
Coventry	2
Cumbria	2
East Sussex	2
Essex	2
Hampshire	2
Leicester	2
Lincolnshire	2
Birmingham	2
Blackburn	1
Bolton	1
Bristol	1
Dorset	1
Dudley	1
Hertfordshire	1
Kingston upon Hull	1
Kirklees	1
Luton	1
Middlesbrough	1
Milton Keynes	1
Newcastle upon Tyne	1
Norfolk	1
Oldham	1
Plymouth	1
Sefton	1
St. Helens	1
Staffordshire	1
Stoke-on-Trent	1
Suffolk	1
Swindon	1
Walsall	1
Warrington	1
Warwickshire	1
Worcestershire	1

Appendix I.2 Geographical Positioning of Participating Local Authorities

Map showing the location and distribution of colleges that participated in England.

Available from www.batchgeo.com/map/543099d4a80c33dcd9ae597f4033b9fa

Appendix J Government Details of SEND

Table 57: SEND status of 16-18 year old learners in post-16 education in 2012/13 aged 15

SEN Status	Number	%
No SEN	906,981	76.7
School Action	148,691	12.6
School Action Plus	76,228	6.4
Statement of SEN	53,065	4.5
Grand Total	1,182,285	100.0
School Action Plus		
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	2,780	3.6
Behaviour, Emotional & Social Difficulties	30,484	40.0
Hearing Impairment	1,867	2.4
Moderate Learning Difficulty	16,434	21.6
Multi- Sensory Impairment	40	0.1
Type not recorded	1	0.0
Other Difficulty/Disability	6,161	8.1
Physical Disability	1,717	2.3
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty	32	0.0
Speech, Language and Communications Needs	3,534	4.6
Severe Learning Difficulty	222	0.3
Specific Learning Difficulty	12,147	15.9
Visual Impairment	809	1.1
Total	76,228	100.0
Statement of SEN		
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	9,023	17.0
Behaviour, Emotional & Social Difficulties	8,317	15.7
Hearing Impairment	1,471	2.8
Moderate Learning Difficulty	13,000	24.5
Multi- Sensory Impairment	92	0.2
Other Difficulty/Disability	760	1.4
Physical Disability	3,109	5.9
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty	1,472	2.8
Speech, Language and Communications Needs	5,231	9.9
Severe Learning Difficulty	5,869	11.1
Specific Learning Difficulty	3,796	7.2
Visual Impairment	925	1.7
Total	53,065	100.0

Department for Education Freedom of Information Request 2014/0075275

Appendix K Checking of Descriptions and Coding

To whom it may concern:

In February 2015, I was approached by Dean West in my capacity as a Senior Research Assistant at Coventry University. Dean stated that he wanted to have checked the data that he had collected as part of his research into cyberbullying. This statement is provided as evidence that I have reviewed an extract from Dean's PhD data analysis and I am satisfied that his themes are a true reflection of the information given by the participants. As part of this request, Dean provided me with the procedure he had used when he had coded his data. From my discussions with Dean and from reviewing extracts from his work I am satisfied that he has adhered to his chosen research approach.

Yours truly,

Jill Evans
Senior Research Assistant
Coventry University
June 2015

Appendix L Reasons by Demographic

Appendix L.1 Reasons for Being Cyberbullied by Demographic

Table 58: Reasons for Being Cyberbullied by Demographic

Demographic	N	Physical Disability (%)	Learning Disability (%)	Physical Appearance (%)	Sexual Orientation (%)	Gender (%)	Intelligence /Ability (%)	Friends (%)	Family (%)	Religion (%)	Ethnicity (%)
Boys	100	9	8	57	27	13	37	39	28	17	16
Girls	201	4	8	79	18	15	36	67	30	10	9
Age 16	11	9	0	9	0	9	18	27	9	0	9
Age 17	33	12	12	24	24	18	33	33	18	21	18
Age 18	15	33	20	47	33	20	60	40	33	27	27
Age 19	5	0	0	20	20	60	80	80	40	40	40
College Cyberbully	28	18	18	75	29	32	61	61	18	18	14
Offline College Victim	208	6	9	74	24	15	38	57	33	17	13
School Cybervictim	237	5	9	78	24	16	40	58	29	13	11
Offline School Victim	243	5	9	74	24	14	39	59	30	15	12
Asian	35	6	6	49	9	14	20	40	20	26	31
Black	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	67	33	0
Mixed	8	0	0	75	25	13	25	38	38	13	13
White	252	5	8	71	22	13	37	57	27	8	4
White Other	4	25	25	75	75	25	25	25	75	50	50
Other Ethnicity	10	20	10	90	10	20	40	90	50	50	80
Physical Disability	15	40	13	73	47	13	53	80	47	13	13
Asperger's Autism	16	31	56	63	25	19	56	44	44	13	13
Dyslexia	50	16	38	82	20	10	42	70	42	14	16
Bisexual	58	7	9	67	47	16	31	59	31	14	10
Heterosexual	236	5	8	66	8	10	33	51	25	10	11
Homosexual	14	0	7	86	79	36	57	50	43	14	7
Other Sexuality	11	18	9	82	73	45	45	100	55	45	18
Financial Assistance	85	0	9	72	19	15	36	56	45	15	12

Appendix L.2 Reasons for Cyberbullying Others by Demographic (Victim Focussed)

Table 59: Reasons for Cyberbullying Others by Demographic (Victim Focussed)

Demographic	N	Physical Disability (%)	Learning Disability (%)	Physical Appearance (%)	Sexual Orientation (%)	Gender (%)	Intelligence/ Ability (%)	Friends (%)	Family (%)	Religion (%)	Ethnicity (%)
Boys	40	23	18	33	30	18	53	35	23	25	23
Girls	23	9	4	17	9	17	17	39	17	9	13
Age 16	73	5	5	66	12	12	38	58	23	10	5
Age 17	143	6	8	66	23	17	34	51	26	10	8
Age 18	84	5	10	64	24	11	38	57	32	17	12
Age 19	20	5	10	95	10	5	10	50	35	15	40
College Cybervictim	28	18	11	18	14	18	25	39	14	11	14
Offline College Victim	27	11	7	11	11	15	30	30	7	7	15
School Cybervictim	29	14	7	14	14	10	24	34	17	10	14
Offline School Victim	40	10	3	18	8	13	25	30	10	8	10
Asian	5	20	20	0	40	0	40	60	40	20	20
Black	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mixed	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0
White	48	15	10	29	19	17	44	31	21	17	19
White Other	5	20	20	20	0	0	0	40	0	20	0
Other Ethnicity	2	0	0	0	50	0	50	100	0	50	0
Physical Disability	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asperger's Autism	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dyslexia	13	23	23	31	31	38	46	46	23	23	23
Bisexual	5	20	20	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	0
Heterosexual	48	17	13	27	21	15	44	38	21	19	19
Homosexual	4	25	50	75	25	75	75	50	25	25	25
Other Sexuality	5	0	20	40	20	40	40	20	20	20	20
Financial Assistance	12	25	17	33	42	25	50	58	33	42	33
Criminal Activity	17	18	12	24	29	24	47	29	29	29	29

Highlighted numbers show the most prevalent two or three responses for each demographic

Appendix L.3 Reasons for Cyberbullying Others by Demographic (Non-Victim Focussed)

Table 60: Reasons for Cyberbullying Others by Demographic (Non-Victim Focussed)

Demographic	N	Fun (%)	Revenge (%)	Anger (%)	Jealousy (%)	Boredom (%)	Provocation (%)	Insecurity (%)	Friends do it (%)	To fit in (%)	Victim Different (%)	Anonymity (%)	Upbringing (%)	Power/Status (%)	Don't Know (%)
Boys	50	44	26	36	10	38	28	6	12	8	10	8	4	18	8
Girls	28	18	46	61	25	21	18	14	11	11	0	7	4	11	0
Age 16	11	27	64	55	18	18	9	0	9	9	0	9	9	9	9
Age 17	34	50	50	50	18	38	35	15	15	9	9	6	3	15	6
Age 18	14	57	43	86	29	71	50	14	21	21	21	21	7	43	29
Age 19	5	40	40	60	20	60	20	0	0	0	20	20	20	60	0
College Cybervictim	30	30	37	57	20	30	37	13	7	10	3	13	3	13	7
Offline College Victim	27	33	44	63	30	30	33	15	11	15	4	11	4	15	7
School Cybervictim	29	14	48	69	31	24	34	21	10	14	3	10	3	14	10
Offline School Victim	42	26	45	62	21	29	21	14	10	12	2	5	2	12	7
Asian	6	50	17	33	0	33	17	0	17	0	0	0	0	17	0
Black	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mixed	1	100	0	100	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
White	58	34	34	47	16	33	26	10	12	10	7	9	3	16	9
White Other	4	25	50	100	25	25	25	0	0	25	0	0	0	25	0
Other Ethnicity	3	100	67	33	33	100	67	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33
Physical Disability	2	100	0	0	50	0	100	50	0	0	50	50	0	100	0
Asperger's Autism	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dyslexia	13	46	31	54	15	31	15	0	0	0	0	8	15	15	8
Bisexual	7	43	31	31	8	23	15	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0
Heterosexual	61	30	33	48	15	30	23	10	11	7	7	5	2	13	7
Homosexual	3	67	0	33	33	100	33	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Sexuality	4	100	100	50	50	50	75	75	25	50	50	75	75	100	50
Financial Assistance	13	38	23	46	15	46	23	8	31	15	8	8	8	23	8
Criminal Activity	19	68	37	53	26	42	32	11	21	16	16	21	5	42	21

Highlighted numbers show the most prevalent two or three responses for each demographic

Appendix M Images of Data Analysis Procedures

Appendix M.1 Images Showing Analysis of Qualitative Data

Image 1 Responses to each open question was exported from Excel to Word and printed

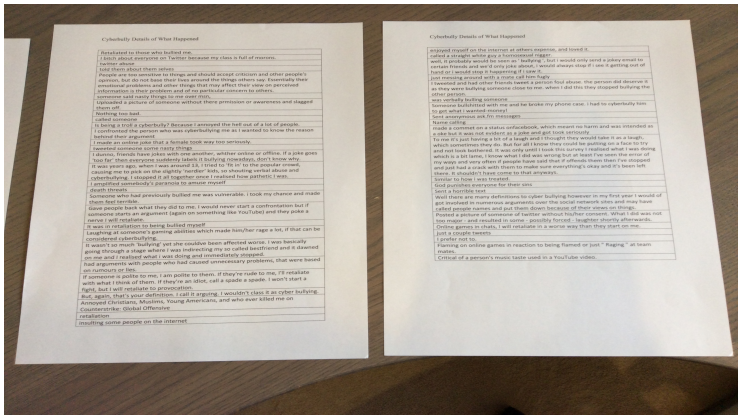


Image 2 Responses were read and coded, with significant statements noted

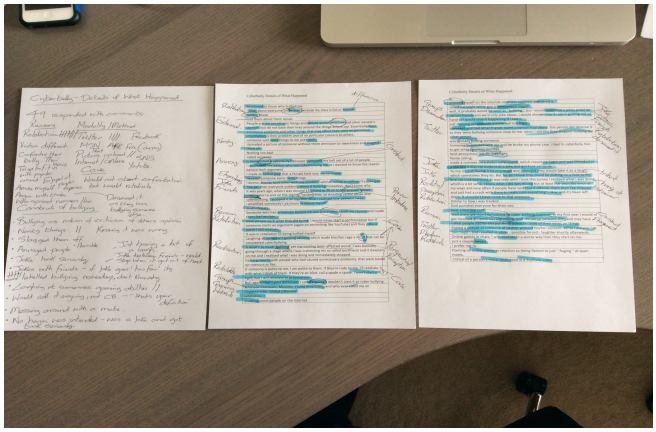
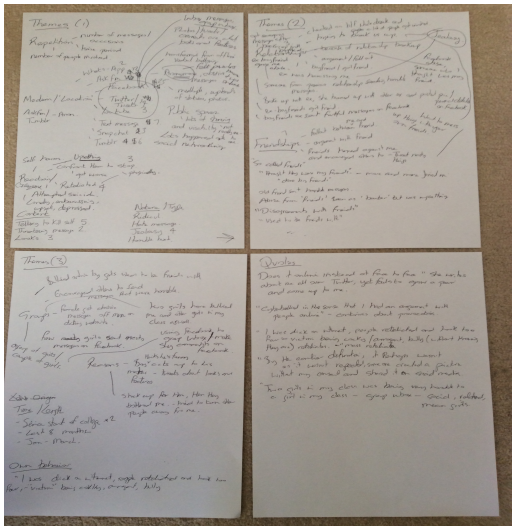


Image 3 Themes were written up from the coded responses



Appendix M.2 Images Showing Analysis of Interview Data

Image 4 Interview transcriptions were printed and read. Scripts were highlighted and annotated with statements that were interesting and noteworthy

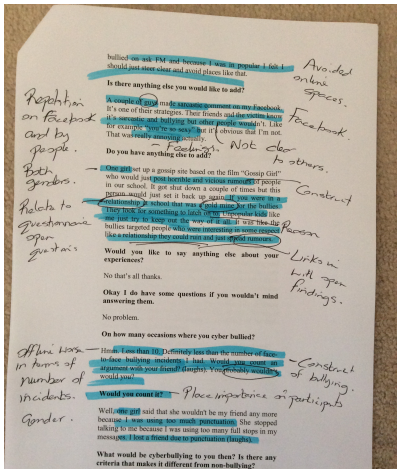


Image 5 Themes emerged from the reading and coding of all transcripts were noted and typed up